

# MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

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## Chairman's Contribution

*Charles Carter*

I would like to start by wishing all of you a happy new year and trust that over the festive season you got what you deserved.

The new year starts with a new glider and new caterers and I feel sure that both will soon be well integrated into the club life.

The committee were offered the chance to buy a Faulkes Flying Foundation DG 505 glider at a preferential rate and after much discussion decided to go ahead with the purchase. Many have argued that the K21 policy adopted 20+ years ago has served the club well and why do we need to change. We think that the fact that it is nearly thirty years since we last updated our two seater fleet is reason enough to move ahead. The Midland Gliding Club has a premier position in the gliding movement and your committee wish to keep it at the forefront. It would be very easy from every point of view to still be flying T21s as some clubs do but to remain in touch we need to move ahead. Obviously we need to sell some gliders and I have no doubt that you will have seen some of our fleet on the for sale lists. We are attempting to appease our treasurer by keeping the purchase as cost neutral as possible. Treasurers in general and ours in particular are quite difficult to appease and we must all be grateful that this is the case.

Our CFI, with the committee's approval, has outlined his policy with regard to the future fleet and we believe that it incorporates a well balanced training fleet to cover the needs of our members.

Make use of DG 505 KAW, it is a fine glider and very nice to fly and it is yours.

Our new caterers Aaron and Lisa recently took over the kitchen and have made a great start. Their first full weekend coincided with the Christmas dinner which was a great success and much enjoyed by all present. Apart from a delicious supper the clubhouse looked fantastic and a big thank you to all who contributed to make it so. The new year celebrations were also entered into with gusto by all, including so I hear, our new chef. Welcome to Aaron and Lisa and not a little thanks to Jan for a major input on several fronts.

The CROW Act which is the Right to Roam by any other name has posed major problems for the MGC. We have been attempting to exclude the active airfield portion of the club's land from being shown on the final definitive maps in the colour of right to roam. The airfield would have excepted status from a right to roam by being classed as an aerodrome but if it were still to be coloured as a right to roam area ie yellow, as was originally scheduled, then we anticipated trespassing problems. Presently, we believe that our active airfield will be shown white on the final maps and therefore not open to public access. I am indebted, once again, to Keith Mansell and Paul Garnham for their tremendous input into the process which you may imagine has been a bureaucratic nightmare and we keep our fingers crossed that we finish whiter than white.

On my recent trip to New Zealand I visited Omarama and flew with the Gavin Wills outfit which I can thoroughly recommend. I was made very welcome and enjoyed a four hour flight in a Duo Discus with Lemmy Tanner as P1. We had thermal, wave and ridge soaring (and scratching) over some of the most amazing mountain and lake scenery which you could imagine. Buy me a beer and I could bore you for hours.

They were actually watering the airfield at Omarama but as you know we do not need to water ours at present. Ours is so wet that what we need to do is to be extra careful any time we drive, fly or even walk on it. Look after it, it is a delicate structure.

Please tackle me if you have any gripes or even if you think that everything is so perfect that I am a saint!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our former treasurer on increasing the bottom line figure from two to three. We are all delighted that David and Vicky Rance have a son to add to their two daughters.

## Early Post Solo Pilots - Representation

*Andrew Sherrington*

At the suggestion of several members, including Nick Heriz-Smith, Paul Rowbottom and Sarah Platt, I offer my services to any member of the club who is (or who will shortly become) a post solo pilot.

There is difficulty in progression for early post solo pilots, and this is widely recognised as a problem. There is an organisational bias towards training student pilots to solo. I went from first flight to solo in three months; I did not solo again for a further nine months. This was not for want of effort or through a lack of dedication; it's just much harder to progress - on my experience, at least three times harder to progress after first solo.

I found that the moment I went solo I was discouraged from entering my name on the course list - some members have been forbidden from taking up course slots. There is limited instructor time available from the general flying list, and the priority of the duty team is the course. Therefore, getting from first solo to being able to solo a K23 seems to be an interminable process, only rectified in my case by attending an evening course. (I extend my gratitude at this point to the magnanimous service of Chris Harris, Tony Danbury and Bob Williams).

Whilst we can all think of members who are totally dedicated to the sport and capable of overcoming any obstacle to their flying, there are some people who cannot devote the amount of time or expense to the push required to overcome the problem. I have a daughter of four-and-a-half, and all of the female compliment of my household can occasionally take a dim view of my absence from them to go off and do something as irrational as gliding. Especially when, week-end after week-end, I appear to make no progress at all.

There is no doubt in my mind that the difficulty in progressing from early solo has lost members from the club and will probably continue to do so in future unless there is an effort to address the situation. For some people, the demotivation involved is sufficient to get them out of the habit of coming to the club and once they do, they generally don't come back. There is a great deal of effort expended in getting the member through solo. It seems a shame to let that effort go to waste.

We knocked around some suggestions as to how to overcome the issue, such as allowing EPS pilots to go on the course; running EPS days; running another aircraft and instructor. All of these have issues especially as there are occasions where we don't have a full duty crew.

It is therefore appropriate to get a handle on the scale of the issue and to that end I am more than willing to act as the representative to the club committee for any member who finds themselves in this situation or who fears that they soon will be. If you think this is a good idea I'd like you to contact me and let me know:

- Who you are
- What your current flying status is
- What your view is on the situation for EPS pilots - whether you think there is an issue or not
- What you think might be done about it.

This is an opportunity to improve a long standing issue in terms of the training syllabus and the motivation of members to continue contributing to the club. So if you have views about this issue I strongly urge you to either contact the club or me to make your point.

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## Aboyne 2004

### *Julian Fack*

You can be sure that if the wind blows at Aboyne in any direction clockwise between SE and N, there will be wave. This September proved the point. Meg and I were there for the second and third weeks of the month, and someone (not necessarily from our party) got into wave every day. This was in spite of the fact that the forecast weather was pretty grotty every day, and throughout the fortnight we saw very little evidence of wave from the ground. The first Saturday was typical, it was blowing strongly and rigging was a problem. After three launches they announced they were putting the tug away as it was too rough on tow and for ground handling, and yet the best height was 23,900 feet.

Our last day was another similar one, but this time we were the lucky ones. I offered Johnny Roberts a ride in the Duo and we launched more or less straight into wave at 3,500 feet. We then climbed to 17,000 feet locally before pressing on towards the west. The wind at height was over 50 knots, but we managed to make slow progress. We worked our way over the Cairngorms and Feshiebridge before getting a nice climb to 20,000 feet on the next bar to the west. Johnny asked if we could return as he wanted to try for a Diamond, so we turned downwind and covered the 38 nautical miles back home in just 13 minutes, over 200 statute miles per hour. When we braked down to land we were amazed to note that the whole fleet was on the ground, only one other glider having got into wave. John then took JZB and tried valiantly for an hour to get into wave, but he joined the rest of the fleet and sank down without success.

During the first week 494 was singularly unsuccessful at getting in to wave, and yet Dave Rance in TL had good wave flights on his first three days. On reflection we were probably a bit mean with our tows, since even Roy Dalling (the DCFI) needed a 5000 foot tow on one day, and Lyn, Roy's wife (and CFI) failed to get the Aboyne Duo into wave on the same day. For whatever reason we did better in the second week. Martin McCurdie had a nice flight on his last day, we climbed to a modest (for Aboyne) 12,000 feet before slowly wending our way west in the sunshine towards Feshiebridge. Martin had a good look at Balmoral Castle, Lochnagar mountain and Loch Muick, the Lyn of Dee, Braemar and the Highland Games Stadium, but we failed to get a climb above the Cairngorms, and so did not see Feshie itself, which was hidden under the cloud cap.

One thing that has changed in the years that I have been going to Aboyne is the move towards cross-country in wave. The locals have got into the habit of trying at every opportunity, and have been very successful, 500s are now quite common. Richard Arkle has compiled an Alpine style map and GPS coordinate list of all the landing fields he has found, and you can download the coordinates from the Deeside GC website and load them into your GPS. This has made a huge difference, because it is very difficult to see any landing fields in the mountains whilst wave soaring at 12,000 feet. On one of our less good days we heard a pilot from Portmoak calling that he was trying a 750 in wave, and he succeeded, in spite of nominating one of his TPs near Aboyne, which was closed in by cloud at the time.

Now we have the map of fields even the visitor can enjoy modest cross countries in wave, although local knowledge still counts for a lot.

Paul Garnham was with us for 10 days and had lots of good flying in the Duo, William Brewis enjoyed the Ventus for the first week, and Chris and Nicky Harris shared the drive with Martin McCurdie for the second week. Sadly Chris suffered a slight stroke and ended up in hospital, so Martin and Nicky brought him back home on the last Saturday.

The record during our fortnight, as shown on the Aboyne wall chart is remarkable, there were wave flights every day, and the best heights achieved were:

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September 23,900, 12<sup>th</sup> 23,700, 13<sup>th</sup> 12,100, 14<sup>th</sup> 12,000, 15<sup>th</sup> 7,000, 16<sup>th</sup> 10,000, 17<sup>th</sup> 20,000, 18<sup>th</sup> 22,000, 19<sup>th</sup> 22,000 (TL) 20<sup>th</sup> 19,980 (TL) 21<sup>st</sup> 15,200, 22<sup>nd</sup> 20,000, 23<sup>rd</sup> 20,000 (TL) 24<sup>th</sup> 20,500 25<sup>th</sup> 19,900 (494).

The superb Aboyne hangar with its 30 metre door opening allowed us to roll the Duo in on its wheels

and Dave Rance used the same facility for the Ventus 2, all very civilised, thanks to the Scottish Sports Council.

One day when it rained we took a trip to the Bridge of Feugh near Banchory, and we were treated to the finest display of leaping salmon we have seen. There were huge ones, tiny ones and everything in between, and they were attempting to jump up the rock face (about 5 feet high) every fifteen seconds or so. Of course you only see the ones that fail the jump, so there is no way of knowing how many made it. We even saw the heron (Dave Rance's favourite?) catch his dinner, which was a treat. The salmon in the Dee are enjoying a bumper year after so many lean ones, partly due to higher water, but also due to the purchase of downstream netting rights by the owners of the salmon beats.

We also managed to keep up our standards as far as the gourmet side was concerned, and found one new hostelry which served superb food at very reasonable prices, but the helpings were so enormous that we were unable to do justice to both a starter and a main course. All our old favourite establishments also came well up to scratch, so we did not lack for enjoyable sustenance.

## **Competition Enterprise 2005**

*Chris Ellis*

Enterprise is coming to the Mynd for the first time. It is a great fun competition run with the very simplest of rules and attracts pilots of the highest calibre. Originally alternating annually between Devon and Somerset GC at North Hill and Shobdon it now moves around a variety of interesting clubs in UK and France. The ethos is much more relaxed than 'regionals' and the tasks are more imaginative and set to make the most of each day's weather. It is always suggested that you have your passport with you as a 'Free Distance' task can mean just that. The last time I flew one in the competition from North Hill Justin Wills and Chris Simpson reached Dover but as it was late in the day they both decided against crossing the Channel. I landed at Lasham when the pain in my posterior, following a 7 hour 30 minute flight on the wooden seat of our Oly 460 the previous day, got too much to carry on safely. Enterprise is not a 'rated' competition but is an ideal way of gaining experience in company with some of the country's top pilots before going on to regionals and nationals.

The operation is pretty well self-sufficient but as we expect an entry of 35 to 40 we will be looking for members to help with some of the organisation, daily control and to provide the necessary local knowledge.

A liaison group, comprising Jon Hall, Neal Clements and myself, has been appointed to work with the Enterprise Committee.

It is proposed that the club two seaters will be available for members to fly tasks with John Stuart and Dave Crowson.

The dates for your diary are Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July with Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July being the 'Fly Home' day. You can learn more about the background of Enterprise from their web site [www.comp-enterprise.com](http://www.comp-enterprise.com).

## Wave Safely

*David Rance*

In mid October we had a lovely wave day at the Mynd with a strong wave entry point over the drive at Linley Hall, about five miles to the west of the Mynd. The wind was south westerly and twenty knots on the ground but with much stronger winds aloft, as befits a good wave day, perhaps as much as forty knots at 5000 feet. Anybody taking an aero tow was able to pull off into smooth rising air and were quickly able to climb above cloud level. We all had fun.

However, a conversation in the club house afterwards suggested that not everybody flying that day had considered the extra Es tacked onto the usual pre launch 'eventualities' that need to be considered before flying above cloud.

Many of the best wave days at the Mynd are quite cloudy and once aloft, there is usually a strong possibility that at some point the cloud will close in below you. If it does, you will be confronted by one of the most beautiful sights available to glider pilots but the only navigational references you will have outside the glider is the sun and just possibly, if you are high enough, the patterns of the clouds to give you an idea of wind direction. No hills, no towns, no valleys, no coastline, no two green fields just north of the airfield. Just blue sky and a wall to wall snow field below you.

If you are lucky to be flying with regular cloud slots to mark the wave, an odd glimpse of the Mynd or Stiperstones may be enough to orientate you but further away, where ground features are not instantly recognisable and it is possible to miss whole towns because they are beneath a wave bar, navigation can become seriously difficult. So before you launch, think about navigation. A GPS is essential kit. Two GPSs are better. One should ideally have a moving map facility as they help hugely with spatial awareness. If you have two, make sure they have independent power supplies. And know how to use them! No good getting lost or stressed out as you are enveloped in cloud, frantically pushing buttons hoping to get some useful information. You won't. Don't forget your half million map which you must use to cross reference with what the GPS is telling you with what you can see out of the window! Remember, controlled airspace isn't sign posted. You have to know where it is and avoid. From the moment you come off tow, navigation and the safe conduct of your flight is your responsibility.

How about instruments? A working turn and slip and or an artificial horizon is essential. It is only when you are enveloped in cloud as the gap fills in or you fall out of the wave and sink slowly but inexorably into a cloud bank that you realise why folk have them installed in their panels. Again, they must be working and you must know how to use them and be able to use them. Flying into a summer cumulus cloud is one thing. Straighten up and you will be out of it in thirty seconds. Descending through a cloud bank for several minutes with the real possibility of icing and water getting into pitot tubes rendering your ASI and varios completely useless is quite another. You may only need cloud flying instruments for a few minutes each year but for those few minutes believe me, you really do need them!

A radio is essential. If you don't have one, how can you talk to the tug (and remember, it's pretty noisy up front so a crappy radio isn't much help when the tug pilot is sitting three feet from a 235 hp engine and propeller at full chat). Or learn that the ground conditions have changed and a 2000 foot cloud base has turned into a 300 foot base as happened to me a little while ago. And if you need to divert to another airfield how can you ask for joining instructions and check their circuit traffic?

I read some while ago, that you should never fly your glider where your brain hasn't been already, which seems good advice to me. If you don't have any of the above kit or it's not working, or you are not current with using it, then please think carefully about whether you should be trying to fly above cloud at all. Reject all peer pressure ("Oh, you'll be all right", "You're not a wimp are you?", "You've got to get these mile high trial lessons done - they've been waiting for ages") and be happy to explain to folk why you reject it.

The tug pilots delight in towing gliders into wave. Giving pilots a good start is what we do. But occasionally things can go wrong with high tows. The usual problem is that as we tow to a wave

bar, the wave collapses or recycles and the gap starts filling with cloud. This can mean that we have clouds forming around us or below. Additionally as the wave recycles and a few million tons of air tries to reorganise itself, the stationary gap and wave cloud that we have been watching whilst waiting to launch is actually blowing down wind at a fair rate and before you can say "field landing", you can be a long way down wind of the site.

If this happens, the first thought to summon up is "Don't Panic!" The second thing is Don't Pull Off. If you have been concentrating on following the tail of the tug, you might not have much idea of your position but the tug pilot has his head out of the cockpit the whole time and will have a much better idea than you of exactly where you are and what is going on around you. If you have enough height and clearly see that, even having descended below cloud base, you will have enough height to get back to the site, then go for it (was the ridge really working?) Alternatively tell the tuggie to take you home. If this isn't an option, stay on tow where there are lots of options. The tug can descend with you on tow (use your air brakes to avoid catching up with him, have you practised this?) The tug can continue to climb into clear air above cloud, can search for wave slots up wind through which to descend, can tow you for anything up to a couple of hours if necessary to find a safe place to descend but we can only help if you stay on tow. So don't panic and don't be in a rush to pull off. There are no cost issues in these situations. If there are safety considerations that lead to a long aero tow, the club will pick up the bill.

Even if you are approaching your pre planned release height, consider whether you are ready to go off tow. The admonishment to the tuggie "Why did you dump me there?" is clearly utter nonsense. Only **you** can pull the yellow knob in your cockpit! The only reason that the tug will dump you is if you are so high on tow that you are lifting his tail, which for the tug pilot is an immediate life threatening situation, or if there are large bits falling off his aircraft and he needs to get rid of you quickly. If you don't like what you see when you arrive at your expected release height, stay on tow and tell the tug pilot to take you home.

So remember, if you are intending to fly above cloud or take an aero tow above the level of the cloud base, please check your kit and know how to use it. Think about the extra eventualities before you take off. If you don't like what you see when you get there, hang on to the tug and tell him to take you back home.

## **From the Flying Field**

*Richard Platt*

The weather has been pretty dire for the past few months but despite this members continue to arrive at the club to get what flying they can (or failing that, to chat and drink coffee courtesy of the new caterers). Mid-week flying continues through the winter on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and all day Friday under John Stuart's care. Tony Danbury regularly flew the Shrewsbury School boys on Wednesday afternoons until their winter break. If you want to get in some circuits or soaring flights, mid-week is an excellent opportunity.

We now have the DG505 in the club fleet for cross country and wave soaring, plus spin training in glass, and general soaring. The DG flying rates have been kept similar, with a slight reduction for longer flights to encourage soaring.

A group from Lasham came up after Christmas with three gliders and made good use of the launch facilities, soaring the ridge and finding wave up to 5000 feet. Several club members were also around to enjoy the flying, and with gliders to spare everyone had good flights. Many thanks to JS, Paul Fowler and Paul Shuttleworth for instructing and running the day.

There is a first solo to report; Felix Dethier, on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October, who many will remember from his extended stay at the Mynd over the summer.

Walter Baumann, Mike Greenwood and Dave Jones have completed their BI rating and been put to work on the treadmill, sorry, I mean joined the rota (Denise and the other stalwarts breathing a sigh of relief I'm sure).

## Tales of Euroglide: 28 June – 10 July 2004

*Paul Garnham*

Euroglide, the 2000+km competition/rally efficiently organised by the Eindhoven Gliding Club, takes place every two years, and for 494 it was the third time. On this occasion (as I no longer have a share) my participation was by courtesy of Julian and the syndicate, to whom I am deeply grateful. This time the team was Julian, Richard Hinley, myself and Eddie Humphries (who is also deeply grateful). We were giving Julian's new motorhome its first serious outing and it proved to be an excellent vehicle for the job. The only other UK teams were Phil and Diana King with LS8 618 and George Metcalfe from Lasham with his ASW28 104. The remainder of the field were predominantly Dutch with one or two Germans, Belgians and a Swiss.

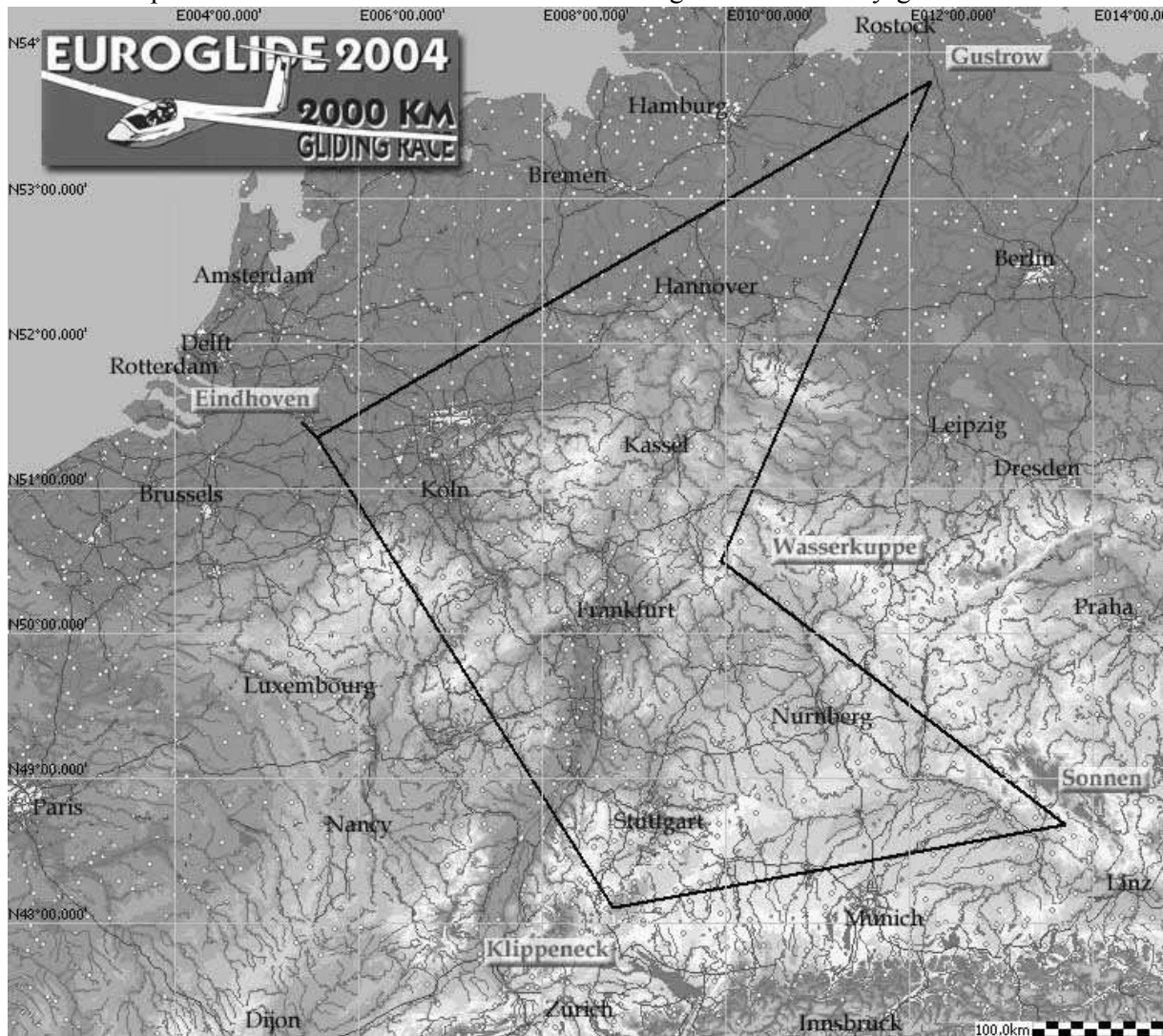
We aimed to get to Eindhoven by **Sunday** lunchtime, well in time for the beer scrum and the lengthy evening briefing, and this we achieved. As the plug had been pulled at a late stage (due to "operational requirements") on the luxurious Dutch Air Force accommodation previously offered, and sampled by us in 2002, we checked into the nearby Novotel, a very acceptable alternative. They tried hard to make us feel welcome, even to the extent of dispensing "Euroglider" condoms in the loo, but I fancy that was just coincidence.

For the rest of the trip Julian and I slept in the motorhome while the hardy "youngsters" had tents. Setting up beds in motorhomes always seems problematic (except in mine of course). In the past I have reported on splintering timber and late night carpentry in Julian's previous motorhome and even in the new one there were minor breakages. Also, actually creating the two beds from the assortment of variously shaped cushions seemed a task worthy of the Krypton Factor. Each night a different arrangement seemed to emerge. Only one "incident" occurred when, in the middle of one night, a cry of "aaaargh" followed rapidly by a crash as Julian hit the floor, suggested that part of his bed had somehow "flipped over".

Next day, **Monday**, we fortified ourselves with a Novotel breakfast and went off to the briefing in the clubhouse on Eindhoven airfield, running the customary gauntlet of the military checkpoint. With a ridge of high pressure in charge, the weather seemed set fair for some serious soaring and we were told that we would be going round the course in an anti-clockwise direction (see the accompanying map).

We were also warned that conditions might deteriorate as the week progressed. Eddie and I were reeling from repeatedly clouting our heads on the edge of the motorhome cab, something we found quite painful (frequent cries of "Oh Dear"). Eventually we learned to duck sufficiently but it took a long while. Clearing the Eindhoven zone at Leende (15 km), was the first, and sometimes tricky, task but the next turn point at Klippeneck lay well over 400 km to the south. As readers of my 2002 account will remember the first part of this leg is not straightforward as one is flying close to the borders between Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. Complex airspace has to be avoided, and straight line tracks cannot be followed for long. In the south there are also some "transponder only" zones, a portent for the future? Julian and Richard were about halfway down the grid. They took off at 1210 and did not return. Cloud bases of only about 3000 feet were reported, and after only 55 minutes they descended to 1400 feet QFE. Thereafter the day improved rapidly. As they had disappeared, Ed and I set off south, using autobahnen where possible. Aachen, Koln, Karlsruhe passed by. 494 was making good progress and we soon lost contact. We heard that George Metcalfe had landed out close to Eindhoven and had taken a relight but amazingly he later caught up with 494 near Karlsruhe. Cloud bases kept improving, eventually reaching 7500 feet by 1630 and the soaring was good. We motored on in the general direction of Klippeneck. By that time it had gone blue and by 1700 494 was short of good thermals. Later, somewhere near Stuttgart we had a phone call to say that 494 was down on an airfield at Eutingen near Tubingen (416 km flown in 5hours 40 minutes). They would see us in the village (near a bar of course) and we duly met up at 2000 hours for a meal. The beer there was very good (indeed the pils and weissbeer were excellent all over Germany). Maybe

because of that, the locals seemed to shout a lot, even in the course of apparently mundane conversation. A couple of other Eurogliders were at the airfield including a Belgian Janus with instrument problems. The crew worked late into the night and were very grateful for the loan of a



Garmin aerial which Julian just happened to have in his pocket.

**Tuesday** dawned blue with cumulus soon developing. The high pressure was holding. Eddie and I, still reeling from the ritual head banging, had the task of getting to the turn point at Klippeneck (45 km distant) and then setting course for Sonnen, some 360 km to the east, right in the SE corner of Germany where it adjoins the Czech Republic. Once again conditions were good and we arrived at Klippeneck with plenty of height i.e. 7200 feet. We heard that Diana was landing there due to a problem with her ASI. There was plenty of gliding going on and it looked a fine sight among the hills and forests. We turned to the north-east and set to wend our way between blocks of airspace and danger areas. At first the going was good with cloud bases of 7-8000 feet. En route we saw an ASW with a TOP engine, a sort of bolt-on job, and a little later a Learjet passed about 1000 feet below us. We were now getting into territory that was familiar to me from previous trips. Ulm and Augsburg passed by. Well north of the Munich zone we passed Ingolstadt (Vorsprung durch Technik), flying close by the Donau river and then south of Regensburg. However as we proceeded east the cloud dissipated and the thermal cut-off was remarkably abrupt. At this point, for some reason, the GPS began to lie about distances. We were soon wondering whether we could make the turn point at Sonnen. Diana in 618, who had almost caught up with us (despite her visit to Klippeneck) was having similar concerns but thought that she could make it to Vilshofen, some 35 km short of the turn point (and she did). We

thought we could too but encountered nothing but sink and the word “nearest” seemed to sum up precisely what was required. “Nearest” turned out to be the gliding airfield at Deggendorf but we became very concerned in the last minute or so as we could not see it from our low altitude although the GPS said we were practically there. Finally, desperately short of angels, we arrived. We had flown 360 km that day in 5 hours 15 minutes but we were north-west of the turn point by about 60 km.

Deggendorf, which supported general aviation as well as a gliding club, was pretty quiet. There was a small restaurant and a bar. Two attractive girls came in. One wore a yellow T-shirt emblazoned with the words “Everyone loves a German Girl”. Shortly afterwards, her boyfriend, a trainee commercial pilot arrived, and it was he who flew the tug next day when Julian and Richard set off on the next leg.

**Wednesday** dawned clear, with deer strolling by and hares gambolling on the airfield. One inspected Ed’s tent. We are now close to the centre of a weak high pressure area. Cumulus seemed reluctant to put in an appearance, but cirrus did. Julian and Richard now had to fly south-east to the turn point at Sonnen before returning north-west towards the Wasserkuppe. The morning remained stubbornly blue and by lunchtime it seemed that it would remain that way. News arrived that Phil had turned Sonnen and was heading north-west. 494 launched at about 1400, too late in hindsight, and Ed and I parked by a lake and snoozed while Julian and Richard flew to Sonnen and back. As they passed us, it became clear that although cloud bases were reasonable, the climbs were not, and a solid cloud sheet moving in did not help. It seemed that they might be taking an early bath at Cham airfield. Ed and I then made the mistake of driving our combination through Deggendorf’s narrow streets, a task made even more fraught by roadworks. Driving towards Cham we heard that 494 had indeed landed there (160 km in 2 hours 40 minutes). As 494 arrived Julian called “494 downwind for 09” and got the anguished reply “no, no not 09, 10!” The sky had become overcast, and the beer was soon flowing as the locals made us welcome and offered us the freedom of the clubhouse. We camped nearby for the night and found a good restaurant by the river in the rather dull town, where the main attraction was a stork’s nest perched high on a tower.

Next day, **Thursday**, the sun shone fitfully and a strong SW wind blew. Low pressure centred west of the UK was beginning to dominate. As there seemed no possibility of a tow, we decided to go forward by road (up to 100 km allowed by the regulations) to Weiden, where we heard that facilities would be available. I don’t recall killing an albatross on the way but misfortune seemed to be in plentiful supply at Weiden, which has to be my least favourite place on this trip. When we arrived, Phil and Diana were there along with several other teams. The sky did not look promising, but a tug was organised for 1400. After launching two single seaters, including 618, the tug pilot took exception to the cross-wind component and decided to stop. Phil reported broken thermals as things steadily deteriorated. After a delay the tuggie returned to the fray and launched us into a grey sky. We fell down after struggling for 20 minutes. We took another tow. The sky on track looked even worse but we got a climb locally to 6000 feet and set off. The headwind was about 20 knots. A large shower then blew rapidly across our track and killed the air stone dead. We sank down and in desperation I tried hill soaring, but the topography was unhelpful. I tried to soar an isolated hill with a village wrapped around it. There was some gusty lift but more than enough sink as well. When we realised that we were admiring the lines of bedroom furniture in the village houses it seemed appropriate to depart. Happily a superb grass field like a cricket pitch presented itself not far away and we were not too dismayed at landing out. Unfortunately our struggle had resulted in only 28 km of forward progress so a further advance by road was not permitted (you have to fly 30 km at least). So back we trundled to Weiden, had a few beers and considered strategy. One Dutch glider was still there. Meanwhile Phil had made it to Rosenthal (about 31 km from Weiden and only a few km further than us) before the weather had closed in. Next day they towed to Bayreuth. Meanwhile we had to deal with Weiden again.

On **Friday** early rain gave way to sun and showers and even the odd thunderstorm. A series of troughs was on course for our area. A tug was promised at 1230 with the proviso that only one launch would be possible (due to tuggie having to go back to work). Ed and I took a launch into a rainy sky and were back within minutes. Miraculously another launch was possible after all! This time the sky

was more open and some local heating gave us a thermal or two to 5000 feet QNH and we set course in the only possible direction 215 degrees(!) towards Amberg, clearly not a step in the right direction. We reported our intention and the team got on the road. As we approached Amberg the soaring improved but heavy showers and storms could be seen to the west, so we settled for Amberg. As the motorhome and trailer appeared we stayed airborne to direct them to the airfield, situated in a rather secluded valley. We landed just as a thunderstorm arrived overhead. Only 34 km flown but at least we had earned the right to trail again if need be. Amberg airfield is a delightful place, set in a little valley with a stream, framed by trees and with two smooth grass runways of the greenest green. The clubhouse is spotless and with great pride the President showed us round the new hangar, largely built by club members. Now, each time I risk a hernia trying to move the hangar doors at the Mynd I have this frustrating vision of the superb sliding doors at Amberg. Later the leader insisted on taking us into town and marched us around at breakneck speed to see the sights of this lovely medieval centre. We then retired to a theme pub for a meal. The President was quite a talker and spoke good English. He seemed very keen to instil into us his view that the UK must join the single currency.

The following day, **Saturday**, the sky did not look encouraging, still very overdeveloped and with thundery activity not far away. A procession of troughs was forecast. Thankful for our visit to Amberg, we trailed back to Weiden with little enthusiasm. The place was pretty dead, as was the sky, so we trailed on to Bayreuth airfield to find 4 or 5 Dutch teams who had spent 4 damp days there while we had been seeing the sights. Conditions did not improve so we went into town to stock up on supplies. The supermarket proved such a treasure trove that we emerged with a trolley piled high with 4 digital cameras at 10 Euros each, an electric drill or two at 19 Euros, a vacuum cleaner for the motorhome and sundry other bargains. The food took second place. All those distractions meant that we had failed to notice the improving weather. Scrambling back to the airfield at 1600 we were too late to fly but learned that Phil King had managed 100 km that afternoon. A consolation evening was spent in the dignified centre of Bayreuth where a Festival was in full swing, with live music, stalls, food and drink aplenty.

On **Sunday** we found ourselves between troughs and the outlook was not good. Julian and Richard took a tow during one of the sunny breaks. Ed and I departed by road but as we got to Bayreuth we heard "494 downwind" on the radio so had to scuttle back to the airfield. They took a second launch and got away. An airship passed slowly by (as they do). Clearly soaring conditions were not good and another trough was close as they arrived at Coberg. A biz jet was held in order for them to land. They had flown 55 km in 2.5 hours! Ed and I had trouble finding the airfield. It turned out to be on very high ground above the town and close to the imposing castle. The airfield was more of an airport, immaculately manicured, and with serious aircraft in the hangars. Gliding was also in progress, courtesy of a familiar blue and yellow SkyLaunch winch which made us feel at home right away. As usual we were welcomed and invited to use all the facilities, including those in the impressive four storey control tower. We walked down into the attractive town through leafy residential areas. We had selected an appealing Greek restaurant for our evening meal but were disappointed as they soon locked their doors in order to watch Greece play Portugal in the European Cup. We took a taxi back to base and ate at the airfield restaurant (and watched the match as well). We heard with some dismay that one glider had already finished (How??!).

Overnight rain gave way to fog and yet more rain on **Monday** morning. A mad aviator in a Cessna took off in 00 visibility. About this time I was suffering from an allergic reaction so a mercy dash into Coberg was necessary for anti-histamines. The sky remained depressing and the wind had increased to 20 knots westerly so reluctantly we decided to trail to the Wasserkuppe. Four or five Eurogliders were already there. We heard that one or two had given up already. Frequent heavy showers prevented any useful flying so we renewed our acquaintance with the excellent gliding museum and took a walk to the famous monument to fallen aviators. That evening we ate at nearby Gersfeldt.

**Tuesday** dawned with a slack south-westerly airstream, but with pressure reasonably high. Our spirits rose. At around 1130 Ed and I launched 494 behind a Pelican microlight, a Canadian type I had not

seen before. It looked like “son of Cessna 152” with a Rotax engine. As usual with such devices it performed very well and we were soon on our way. Unfortunately, on account of the elevated terrain and lowish cloudbase, we had a useful band of only 1000 feet to soar in, but progress was possible with 3 or 4 knot averages. We headed east of north towards the Harz mountains (2000-4000 feet) which were soon clearly visible. Things were going well now, with 6000 foot bases and 3-5 knot averages. That all changed as soon as we passed over the Harz, and we struggled for a while over the large town of Wernigerode, on the north side, where enormous Stalinist blocks of flats stood out starkly. By 1400 the going was getting a bit tricky as we approached Helmstedt, a town hated by all who drove to and from Berlin during the cold war. Many boring hours could be spent at the check-point there while grim guards thrust mirrors under one’s car and scanned paperwork. Now things are different. No traffic jams in sight as we descended to circuit height and tried in vain to spot the gliding field that was marked on the chart. We eventually convinced ourselves that it had been sold for development (wrong!). As landing seemed imminent, I picked a useful, though rather narrow, grass strip. I noticed a woman with a dog walking along the edge. Eddie said he could read the dog’s name on his collar but I’m sure he was exaggerating. In the event we didn’t get to meet the woman with her dog as a weak thermal came to the rescue and slowly we climbed away, bidding farewell to Helmstedt.

To be continued.

## **A Good Beginning: 3 January 2005**

*John Parry*

I started the year with two days of indecision – should I rig, or would it be better to fly the motor glider? The closest I got to flying was sitting at the launch point watching darkness descend through a misting canopy followed by a tow back to the trailers and derig.

So today I rigged in the morning having been assured last night by a local farmer that this would be a good day. The farmer seemed initially curiously reluctant to rig his own aircraft, but having had two days of being talked out of flying by listening to negative ideas I was determined to get going. So we rigged, towed to the launch point and waited for the winch driver to change from lunch to launch. During this wait everybody who had been flying landed, some from suspiciously low heights. Simon Adlard looked thoughtful and said that I *could* launch if I really wanted to – well, I wanted to.

Luckily by then the wave suppression that had brought everybody down had shifted wavelength so the ridge was working normally again. Well, maybe not quite normally – you don’t normally get 4 knots average very smoothly lifting you past 2000 feet. Not much later I was looking down at a classic wave cloud over the Mynd from nearly 7000 feet QFE. By now others had joined the playground, Simon radioed back having reached Shobdon, I believe without turning, to check that there was still a hole at the Mynd. I was able to reassure him that it was open from Banana Lake to Shrewsbury. Then it all changed, I lost the lift, looking down the firm wave cloud was breaking up and forming a street upwind from the clubhouse. After losing about a thousand feet I managed to re-establish and climb back slightly higher than before, but the wide open spaces were becoming less wide and open.

It seemed prudent to descend, especially listening to reports from other gliders. Wheel down, brakes out, head for the shrinking hole over Linley Hall – which shrank to nothing just as I reached it. Turn and slip on, check GPS, radio call, spare a thought for Charles Carter whose last call was “John, can you actually see through that hole?” just as I vanished from his sight. What seemed like a few lifetimes later I emerged conveniently over my house and did a few turns to get used to the soggy grey contrasting so strongly with the bright blue above the cloud.

I was glad that David Rance’s article on wave flying above cloud (see page 6) was fresh in my mind.

It was a great start to the year, reminding me just how wonderful wave flying is, and how often you

can get an unexpectedly enjoyable flight in the winter.