

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

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AGM

John Parry

We don't yet have a date for the AGM but it should be some time before the next newsletter. Please come along and be involved, find out what is going on and have your say. This is your chance to vote for your committee, and indeed to become part of this committee.

<p>Please send Newsletter contributions to:</p> <p>John and Ann Parry Holly Cottage Wentnor Bishops Castle Shropshire SY9 5EE Telephone..01588 650379 Email.....John.Parry@Virgin.net</p>	<p>Club Details:</p> <p>The Midland Gliding Club The Long Mynd Church Stretton Shropshire SY6 6TA Office Telephone.....01588 650206 Office Fax.....01588 650532 Members Telephone..01588 650405 Email.....office@longmynd.com</p>
<p>Club web site: www.longmynd.com</p>	

Chairman's Contribution

Charles Carter

The twinge in my gammy knee is much improved and there are strange noises coming from the bushes which can only mean one thing. Spring is just around the corner and now is the time for all glider pilots to start cashing in those brownie points so desperately earned during the winter months. You've refurbished the bathroom/bedroom, painted the garden fence and finally convinced your children that the total stranger who appeared at the end of the last soaring season is actually their father and so the way is now clear to get up to the club and start doing some serious flying. Don't forget to say goodbye to the children.

There have been some very decent days during the last few weeks and those who have made the effort have been rewarded with some good thermal flights. There have also been some less than welcoming days when igloo building has been preferred to flying. Paul Fowler was the architect of a notable igloo built by the Shrewsbury School contingent. Being only a basic igloo maker I was confined to cutting snow blocks.

Roger Andrews has the C of A programme well advanced and at the present time is finishing re-covering the fuselage of the K13. When our gliders come out of the workshop they are in A1 condition for flying and it is our job to carry out the cleaning of them so admirably outlined by Denise in the last newsletter. Those of you who fly at other clubs will know that dirty gliders are not tolerated and I would like that to become our norm.

During the previous few winters the clubhouse has been going through a refurbishment programme and this winter is no exception. The office, the briefing room and the bar have all had the treatment under Jan Outhwaite's guidance. Thanks to all who have contributed, they are the usual suspects and I will not list them here for fear of missing someone but they have done a grand job and Allan Reynolds (committee buildings) is to be congratulated for keeping the tight control on expenditure which was his brief from the committee. The bar now looks so good that I hope it does not lead to an increase in drinking although the Treasurer tells me he is going to do all he can to encourage drinking. I think that he is interested in the profit margin but am not absolutely sure.

Now that the new OS Pathfinder maps for this area are available and on which the Right to Roam areas are defined, it may be helpful to clarify the position with regard to the club. The new maps show the areas where a Right exists as being colour washed yellow and where no Right to Roam exists as being colour washed white. There is no Right to Roam on any of the club's land which is all within the boundary fence. This means that on the new OS map the club land is colour washed white except for the area of common land which runs from Asterton knoll down the west side of the Mynd. (All commons have to be coloured green.) However, no Right to Roam exists on the club's area of common land.

The public can still exercise their rights to use the bridleways and footpaths for legitimate use and our duty of care for them whilst they are doing so remains as it has always been.

A couple of weeks ago a foolish tuggie parked his tug on Asterton Knoll on the west side of the stone road when he went for his lunch. He left his rope in a big loop across the road. After lunch an even more foolish glider pilot drove his Landrover over both loops of the rope while returning to the launch point. A pint to the first one who can tell me why I have mentioned it. The foolish tuggie and the foolish glider pilot are excluded but they would probably not know the answer anyway. By the way I do not know who the culprits were.

The AGM is coming up and despite my mentioning the need for willing or even unwilling recruits for committee in previous years there seems to be a noticeable absence of bodies. The club does depend on volunteers to make it function and if you think that you have something to offer and a bit of spare time in which to offer it then in the words of Delia Smith "let's be having you".

I'm looking forward to a great soaring season and hope to see you up there.

CFI's Bits

Neal Clements

Visiting instructors

Please can I remind you about the process for inducting visiting instructors who wish to instruct either in their own or our gliders. The office has a checklist which must be completed and signed by the instructor. It encompasses things like seeing the field from the ground, being briefed on the launching. It is very stressful for a visiting instructor, very often they are flying a strange aeroplane, at a strange site, on a strange launching method with the pressure of instructing as well. The stress will not be apparent until conditions become a little difficult then it will be too late. Please help by just confirming with the office or the number one of the day that the checklist has been completed.

Evening courses

Once again, starting in May, we are running evening courses. Bob Williams will be in charge and if you are interested in taking part on these courses then please contact Bob directly or via the office. These courses are a superb way of developing your flying and your theoretical knowledge and Bob and his team always have huge success in bringing pilots on.

Planning changes

Below I reprint a request from the BGA regarding planning applications. Our sport is under constant threat from three large pressures, the freedom of our airspace, the construction, use and insurance of our aircraft and the number and quality of the sites we can operate from. It is in all our interests to respond to the request below. I urge you to help with the lobbying.

Planning Threat to Our Airfields - Action Request

Proposed changes to planning policy guidelines (England & Wales) will place many of our airfields under threat from developers. The changes would classify all airfields as brownfield sites and, as local authorities would be under pressure to allow development on the entire site, would make our airfields very attractive to developers. The current policy excludes airfields from the brownfield definition and this exemption was central to the saving of Bicester for gliding.

All pilots are urged to resist this change by writing to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and/or their local MP. Responses must be received by the ODPM by 27 February. More details and suggested responses are on the BGA web site.

<http://www.gliding.co.uk/bgainfo/news.htm>

Airspace and wave flights

Below I reprint an email from Bill Dean regarding our airspace above us, we must record wave flights, now we have broadband at the club (brilliant work by James Moore) there is really no excuse.

Dear Mynd,

Bruce Cooper has again asked for flights to be recorded on the ladder, to help argue our case for our use of airspace. He has posted as follows:

There will be some meetings to discuss our access to airspace above FL 195 early next month, it would help greatly if any flights above FL100 were posted on the national ladder site, particularly from Yorkshire and North/ Mid Wales. We really need to see where the best and most used wave is. Some clubs in good wave areas have posted 1 or 3 flights, some none at all. It does not require a lot of effort to post flights so please help.

The original solution to the above FL195 situation might not be workable and we could end up working on smaller boxes rather than large areas, so please post those flights so we know where to ask for boxes.

If you look at the ladder site www.bgaladder.co.uk and select "Club - Midlands G C" you will see that there are no entries at all since 1st October. Is it really the case that not one interesting flight has been done, or is it that members at the Mynd just don't care if we lose our airspace?

Regards,

Bill.

W.J. (Bill) Dean.

Five Hours in an Oly 463

Martin Gittins

We've received this account (written for the Aviation Special Interest Group of MENSA) of a Mynd flight from a former member who found the club website. In his email to us he writes:

I was a member way back in the early 1970s. I still have a log book full of names such as Chas Nightingale, Carson, Spicer, Bull, Ken (Piggy) Payne and Ernie Ainscough (then CFI). I left to join the RAF and enjoyed some spirited gliding in some interesting places. I was CFI of the Army Gliding Centre in Germany for a while, and finished my time gliding as the CFI of Two Rivers Gliding Club at RAF Laarbruch in Germany. Best wishes to all your members, I have some very fond memories of both the club and its members.

By the time I arrived at the Midland Gliding Club, the next badge that it was realistic for me to attempt was the Silver duration. In simple terms a continuous flight of five hours. In less simple terms it was five long hours, without toilet facilities, lying semi-recumbent in a cockpit not unlike a small bathtub, under a tight fitting Perspex canopy, constantly concentrating on flying the machine while dodging other gliders and searching for the often elusive rising air needed to remain airborne. Easy peazy.

The weekend of 10/11 November 1973 was forecast to provide just such conditions. As luck would have it the wind was strong enough to justify the use of the bungee. Because it was such an unusual method of getting airborne – I seem to remember that Long Mynd was the only place that was using it by then, and then not very often – a number of restrictions applied. Only reasonably well qualified pilots need apply. Check rides were required in a two seater and the first solo bungee launch was to be in an aircraft the pilot was familiar with.

On the 10th I had my check ride in the K13. On the 11th I got into the club's Olympia 463 and launched to attempt my five hours. As I had never used the bungee before this particular weekend, and I had never flown the Oly 463 before, I was not only bending the rules somewhat, but also letting myself in for a very steep learning curve. Fortunately the 463 was a relatively easy aircraft to fly so the launch, while exciting, went without a major hitch. The ridge was working well providing steady lift up to 800 feet above ridge height.

I thought that my main worry at this stage would be boredom. The ridge at the Mynd was some miles long and providing the wind blew with enough strength in the right direction I should cruise it. Ah, silly me. Problem number one. Ridge soaring confines you to a fairly narrow band of lift that, if you are sensible, you try to stay at the top off. But then so does everybody else. As the MGC had a reasonable fleet of gliders and a larger number of private owners, all of whom wanted to share my ridge, things got rather crowded. Worse yet I got out of sync with the others so that I was coming up the ridge as everybody else, almost without exception, was coming down it. Talk about the Battle of Britain revisited. Having done two bouts of aerial combat I waited until the third pass and then did a smart 180 to end up tailing the gaggle. That's better... now to relax.

It's amazing how slow a watch will turn if scrutinised every two minutes. After an hour and a half things are really beginning to drag, but not for long. I started to get the impression, quickly confirmed by the instruments, that I was slowly losing height. The lift had reduced to nothing and was interspersed with areas of sink. The wind, while still strong, had shifted direction. In desperation I hung on. And hung on. And hung on. In fact I hung on until I was below the point at which I could safely abandon the ridge and make a circuit to land. So I hung on a bit more. The ridge kept coming closer until eventually it was nearly on a level with me. I was just about holding my own but my position was precarious. While the airfield was out of reach I was still some hundreds of feet above the valley and the option of landing in a field was available. The club had a number of farmers fields spotted that should have been fairly easy to land in, given the prevailing wind, and were known to be owned by farmers who were not likely to object to an unannounced arrival with buckshot. I wish I had paid more attention to the briefings and knew which fields were acceptable. Lacking that knowledge I had better hang on.

There was an indentation in the ridge that, if I remember rightly, was called the Asterton Gully - after the small hamlet at its base. Passing it, I felt a gentle push under one wing. Lift? As most of the more sensible people had already landed I felt that an exploratory turn was in order. In ridge soaring all turns are away from the ridge which in this case made great sense as a turn towards the ridge would result in Martin and ridge being in collision – and guess who would have won. The lift continued through the 180 degree turn. To abide by the rules, and avoid the ridge, I reversed the turn. Lift all the way. I continued to S turn, gently gaining height as I did so. Because the wind was still fairly strong, and the 463 could be flown fairly slowly, I was making my turns almost on the spot and staying in the lift. This had the distinctive, effervescent, feel of thermal lift; and such it proved to be. Once above ridge height and with no other gliders in the immediate vicinity I started to circle. The lift increased until I had climbed steadily up to 2000 feet above site. Sometimes hanging-in-there works.

I have now completed two of the five hours required, but am in my element as thermal soaring is my forte. Pushing upwind into the valley more thermals were found, increasing my height to 3500 feet above site. I had another of those “easy peazy” moments, which tended to come before an embarrassing fall. The thermals hung in for a while and provided me with some relaxed and happy flying. This didn’t stop me from checking my watch at regular intervals. By now I had stopped being silly, so instead of checking every two minutes I had expanded it to at least every three minutes.

With three hours gone and a mere two hours, or 120 minutes, or 7200 seconds, to go I felt the thermal activity was starting to peter out. If in doubt, back to the ridge. It was working, after a fashion but to a lesser degree, and there I hung passing time.

Glider pilots survive on optimism and somebody had found a small, and very limited, wave bar out in the valley. Mountain wave, as it is often called, conjures up ideas of lift to heights beyond imagination. In reality, wave can be quite a localised affair, given only to save glider pilots in distress. The last hour of my flight consisted of a very strange flight pattern. Flying along the ridge, south to north, I held my own in the localised hill lift. Pushing out into the valley I encountered a wave system that, given a north to south course, let me regain the high I had lost getting to it. And so, for the last hour, I flew a racetrack that involved ridge lift on the way up, and wave lift on the way down. Having, in the excitement, ignored my watch for a while it allowed the five hour point to elapse without alerting me. By the time I looked again I was 10 minutes past the magic five hours.

What I had not realised is that Chris Wilson, absolutely my best buddy at the time, was following me around my circuitous route to fame. As it turns out my Oly 463 was a bit quicker, and more efficient, than his Oly 2b. He hung in as best he could but eventually I lost him in increasingly difficult conditions.

The circuit that followed was normal, and in no way significant. I landed after 5 hours and 20 minutes. The landing was routine and I came close to avoiding the ground loop that was a regular feature of the Oly 463, it having a very short fuselage and therefore not much rudder authority in a crosswind.

Chris went on to prove his flying ability a little later by getting his PPL. Oh yes, and he also became something pretty senior, driving and training wise, with British Midland Airways.

Dogs *John Parry*

Please remember:

- Dogs are not allowed in the clubhouse at any time.
- On the active airfield dogs must be on a lead and restrained by a responsible person at all times.

Hay for the Horse

Ann Parry

I encountered this phrase in one of the club's early account ledgers. I was in fact looking for any information about the long table in the dining room, such as when we acquired it and where it came from. No luck with that, but there is an item for Hay for the Horse. I believe there was a horse, though it sounds unlikely, but that story needs more research (was it something to do with bungeeing, or have I imagined that?). Back to our wonderful long table. It features from the earliest days of the club, seen in a picture from 1936 captioned "The First Tea", which celebrated the opening of the new hangar. We have the idea that it is an ex-military table, but are not sure where that notion is from. Is there anyone who knows or remembers?

The table is one of the fine things about the club, a contender for the heart of the place. Not just a place for eating meals, but a place to talk, listen to stories and watch the world go by, inside and out. Or study, read, play (work?) with computers, work, receive a massage, gossip, look after children, just generally hang out. Did I mention delaying the moment of going back onto the airfield, or preparing for a cross-country flight? Or tea and cake after flying? What about Saturday nights, eating supper with flying friends and visitors round the table? Or the many dinners and parties that have taken place, not just the planned social events but the way some of us have wished to celebrate birthdays and such at the club? And then there is the view from this long table. OK, sometimes it's steamed up windows, and even if they aren't, then it's cloudy outside. But then there are the glorious summer evenings, when we can eat supper while looking across the hills of mid-Wales to Cader Idris on the horizon, and watch the sun setting.

Some time ago a splendid bench appeared outside the club house, positioned to enjoy the view to the west. It is in memory of Stan Jones, who was secretary around 1958 for a number of years.

Dave d'Arcy will resume 'From the Flying Field' for the next issue, and has agreed to look after our entry to club news in *Sailplane & Gliding*. Roland Bailey has filled this spot with his inimitable prose for years now, for which many thanks. Roland, we were hoping to see you at the Mynd more often now that you've retired? Come and fly your glider lots this year!

Mark Wakem sent us a cutting from *The Daily Telegraph* sports section, 6 January 2006. It features Lembit Opik on sport in his world. He is enthusiastic about a number of activities, flying gliders being one of them. The piece concludes with him saying "I've thought carefully, and am often asked, about what I'd most like to do once I've fulfilled all my ambitions in politics. For me, the choice is a straightforward one: it would be to glide." Lembit, the K8 and the rest of the club fleet awaits you, when it's all back from Spain that is. We hope to have an account of that expedition in the next issue.

Task Week 2006

John Parry

It may seem a long way off now but you may like to plan ahead. Task Week will as usual be the week leading up to the August Bank Holiday, that is August 19-27.

Using the Competition Enterprise system was so popular last year we will be doing the same again this year. For those who don't know, Enterprise rules encourage all pilots of all abilities to make the most of every day for flying cross-country. We hope that there will also be opportunities for non-solo pilots to take part with suitable P1s in club two seaters.

Rockpolishers 2006

Sarah Platt

Did you know that the Mynd are the current champions of the National Interclub league?

Did you also know the first Rockpolishers 2006 inter-club league event weekend is on the 29/30th of April at the MGC? Well you do now.

As usual this first weekend seems staggeringly close and therefore I'm calling on all of you interested pilots to brush off your map cases and get some circuits in preparation for the one or possibly two practice weekends that will be made available to us by the weather prior to the event.

Having just taken over the team captain's role, which has been ably filled by Dominic Haughton for the last few years (thanks Dominic), I will need lots of support.

Rather pleasingly, a few novice pilots have already stepped forward, so it is down to the rest of you novices, plus all you intermediates and pundits now!

For those who don't know: Rockpolishers (inter-club league) is a great introduction to cross country and competition flying, so please don't think it is not for you.

In fact many people have flown their Silver distance or their first field landing in Rockpolishers. Our aim will of course be to retain the Interclub trophy for a second year - but the most important thing is for all involved to have FUN!

There are six clubs in our league, each of whom send a team of at least three pilots to each meeting. Each team consists of a Novice (not flown a 300 km), an Intermediate (not flown a 500 km or a Nationals competition), and Pundit (anyone). Club gliders are available to take to these events, so don't worry if you are not in a syndicate.

The dates this year 2006 are:

29/30 April - Long Mynd

27/28 May - Talgarth

17/18 June - Aston Down

15/16 July - Usk

To support the Rockpolishing effort we are looking to try a few new and not-so-new ideas:

- 1) I am trying to arrange a couple of weekends of motorglider field landing practice for any who may want it.
- 2) We will be resurrecting the weekend task flying where we will set a task and all go off and fly it (this will be set to suit those taking part). The task flying will start on the first weekend of April as practice for the first event, and will hopefully continue throughout the summer. Obviously, if you can take part some weekends in April, then there is more chance of you being fairly current and being chosen for the first event.
- 3) For those who do not feel ready to head off on their own yet (even if you've not gone solo yet) we hope to take a two seater to each event, to fly alongside the competition. This is an ideal opportunity to get your first taste at cross-country flying.

More Rockpolishers news and updates will follow. In the meantime, please email me if you're interested in taking part, either as pilot, as P2 in the two seater, or even as crew. I will be putting a sheet up in the clubhouse for you to sign up with your preferences and available dates, or preferably, email me with this info.

sarahplatt1@virgin.net

A Waste of Time?

Ann Parry

A while ago I helped a visitor (I think one of the Cambridge students on their October week at the Mynd) fetch his glider back to the launch point. He'd just flown one of our K21s solo, and had failed to contact the weak wave above the hang-glider field. Just a circuit then. But he said something about that being a waste of time. Hang on, I thought, isn't he the guy who went solo during the week, so is a very early solo pilot? Already behaving as if he were a far more experienced pilot? I said something about it always being worth taking a launch.

This set me wondering, especially as I'd just had an exciting five minute flight in heavy sink on the ridge, surprising turbulence over the hang-glider field below the soaring gliders, and rapid circuit from a lower than usual starting point. I'd decided I'd have another go, at least to try and manage the mix of ingredients better for the next circuit. In fact by the time I launched either the conditions had changed or I had a better plan, for this time I made it into the gentle wave for a soaring flight, my first in wave for longer than I care to think. I wouldn't have had that pleasure if I hadn't decided for another circuit.

On another winter day recently I had two flights, floating down from southerly launches. The first was exciting because my canopy was misted up for the first section of the launch. Not something I wish to repeat, as if the launch had failed I would have been in trouble. But it was so beautiful in the air, with mist in the valleys to the south of the Mynd, and the hills clear, that on landing I decided to have another go, just to admire the view. Checked with other pilots about canopies, and this time left my canopy open until the last moment. No problem, and another memorable flight.

Mike Whitton was back from China for Christmas. Musing on this theme I reminded him of a mutual flight we had years ago on a dull, grey November day. Hardly worth flying you'd think, but that slide down from launch height remains with me because of being in the quiet beauty of the sky, rather than looking at it from the ground.

Inspired by flying with John Stuart on the shortest day of the year (21st December), I too went to fly on 23rd December. But I'd left it too late, and by the time I was on the launch point the other gliders were low on the ridge, and canopies were beginning to mist up. Should I launch or not? I decided not to, there were too many red lights for me. Another time. It's rare not to fly if I've rigged, but I certainly won't fly my glider if I don't rig it.

By the Way...

Ann Parry

...we are always interested in contributions for the newsletter! From first impressions, learning to fly, that first solo, flying and retrieve stories, expeditions elsewhere, competition flying, instructing - well, the whole range of flying activities. So if you have a story to tell, please contact us.