

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

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Chairman's Ramblings

Charles Carter

I would like to start by wishing John Stuart hearty congratulations on reaching the ripe old age of 60. Having had a year of over 60s life I can tell him that it has few things to recommend it but that your memory is so short that you can not remember what it was that you used to enjoy when you were younger but can no longer manage. I, like many of you have learnt something from John on every flight we have shared with him and I do not doubt that his ability and patience in the air is second to none.

Although I was unable to attend on every day of Task Week (pressure of work for a poor downtrodden farmer) I felt that it was a very successful week for the spirit of club life. Lots of enthusiasm on the flying days for the pilots and lots of tent building and adventures for the pilots of tomorrow and all enjoying some fine catering.

Our thanks to John Parry for Directing, Nick Heriz for Task Setting and to Dominic Haughton for the Met and to Hazel Turner for manning(?) Control.

John Roberts won the Alison Rowson Task Week trophy with a selection of P2s in the club's DG 505 so congratulation to all. It was especially nice to see Keith Mansell presenting the prizes after his recent problems and we wish him a swift return to full health.

The last day of Task Week, Sunday the 27th and Monday the 28th both proved to be good wave days with yours truly finding Monday infinitely easier despite three hours of trying on Sunday. Ann Parry will tell you where I went wrong.

Those of you who do not come to Task Week because you are not competing or think that it not for you should think again. There are always lots of instructors and two-seaters hanging about and there is always an opportunity to coax a rewarding flight out of the day. There are also lots of chances to go on retrieves and to have fun in the bar on your return.

The more observant among you will have spotted another K 13 on site. This has been purchased from Nympsfield as a replacement for the written off CRL. Roger Andrews and I aerotowed it up from Nympsfield on the 4th August in what turned out to be a very interesting flight. Buy Roger a beer and he will tell you all about it. Being over sixty I have forgotten already.

The committee is actively looking for a K21 as a replacement for FWQ but they are a rare commodity at the present time. We will endeavour to find one for the start of the new season.

We are fortunate at MGC to be able to enjoy soaring all the year round so make sure that you do not miss out on a good ridge day or even a great wave day by not bothering to turn up at the club and then reading of someone's exploit in the Newsletter later.

I mentioned in the last newsletter that I would tell you how much it cost you to repair JGJ after the K23 was carelessly pulled into the rudder. The repair was in excess of £500 and the glider was out of action for a week. Food for thought I hope.

CFI's Bits

Neal Clements

Operations Reliability Form

You may have noticed at weekend that we have introduced an 'operational reliability form'. The purpose is to gather feedback about any aspect of the operation that hinders our launch rate. Already the difficulties with the handheld radios has shot to the top of the list and we are taking steps to resolve them. Please let the launch director know if you spot anything that needs fixing.

What Would You Do?

We have had an incident recently which we can all learn from. The aircraft took off with a dirty canopy and had to land into sun. This in itself is very difficult but was compounded by doing an opposing circuit. As luck would have it another aircraft, without a radio, was on circuit and landed in a conflicting line. There are two lessons to be learnt from this, first check your canopy and second, if you decide to do an opposing circuit then ask yourself how will you deal with the opposing traffic, especially if it conflicts with you on landing.

Book the DG505

The DG505 won Task Week and John Roberts pointed out that it we are so lucky to have such a machine. Except for Task Week we have not, up to now, been able to make full use of it and this needs addressing. The glider can be booked by anyone for a cross country flight, well in advance and this is what I recommend you do.

1. Choose a date and call or email the office to reserve the glider.
2. Choose an instructor. Most of our instructors (including basics) are capable cross country pilots.
3. Liaise with your instructor beforehand to confirm the weather looks OK and organise a potential retrieve crew and then turn up.

Unless it is an exceptional day I am recommending that the flights are 100 km triangles, they teach everything you need to know about cross country, are great fun and if you do land out you will not be too far away.

Don't forget you will only pay for the first two hours of soaring so you don't have to worry if the flight takes a long time.

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From the Flying Field

David d'Arcy

On Sunday 9th July we did 77 launches and didn't break anything. Which I thought was quite amazing when told so by the office, as our luck has not been good of late. But we did 77 launches. A frequent figure of yester-year but not so common during our weekends this year. At the end of Task Week Chris Ellis initiated an informal discussion on this topic, which I felt was well received and beneficial to those present. You may like to take it further in these pages.

The final round of the Inter-Club League was held at Usk on the 15th/16th July during hot blue conditions. Our team were Allen Reynolds (novice) on Saturday and Mark Sanders (novice) Sunday, Dave Crowson (intermediate) and Paul Shuttleworth (pundit). Dave flying 494, was able to take Helen Johnson and Jim List up and show them the ropes of competition flying. Paul had a real first on Saturday by beating the then Standard class world champion Andy Davis to third place, but losing out to the local knowledge of Talgarth's pundit John Clark. Dave won both his days with huge smiles of 'it couldn't have been easier' stories (oh, if only). Our novices struggled a little with the tricky blue conditions landing out both days, incidentally all but John Clark landed out on the Saturday. Anyway, what of the final scores? Would we retain our Rockpolisher league title? And it couldn't have been closer. We led the Mynd held event, then were first equal with Nympsfield after Talgarth. Round 3 at Aston Down saw us still joint first, but now with Aston Down, and finally round 4 saw us still tied for the lead but this time with Nympsfield. The tied result we think a first for the Rockpolisher league, and so to decide all the 1000 point day scores were added up between the two clubs to settle the winner. This was Bristol and Gloucestershire GC (Nympsfield). Boo. (All my fault really for pussyfooting about around Aston Down.) A real shame as it would have been such a home field advantage for ICL final that the club is hosting led by Jon Hall.

You will by now have noticed the two new gliders in the hangar having joined the club fleet. Out go the blue K13 and FWQ, and in come an Orange K13 from Nympsfield and K21 GBB on hire from Brian Sprekley. However, GBB has by now served its hire period and therefore have moved on to pastures new, we await the committee's decision on its future replacement.

Lately we have had some special birthdays. Big congratulations go to our DCFI John Stuart on his Nimbus 4 birthday (60:1). The surprise celebration was held on Task Week's final day party night and was well enjoyed by all. Paul Shuttleworth also celebrated his 40th with club members on 5th August and for those with clear heads the next day provided some excellent soaring, where JS went to Lake Vyrnwy and back in the DG.

During task week Steve Tilling completed Silver distance in his Asir 642 to Aston Down when I only managed 20 minutes and a field landing. Steve would also have managed his five hours Silver duration if it weren't for the fact that he was going on holiday the next morning and had promised to be home by 19:00. True gliding spirit there I think. I finally managed to break my 300 km duck by completing a 309 km on the first task day of the Midland regionals, repeated this feat the next day and completed a further 360 km later in the comp. Also comping this summer were Rose Johnson, Iain Evans, JonnyBoy (Roberts, 3rd in Junior Nationals), Paul Stanley, Mike Witton, Sarah Platt, Julian Fack and Paul Garnham (Euroglide), Julian with John Parry (Northerns), Andy Holmes, Ian McArthur (4th Club Class Nationals) and Chris Alldis. Congratulations to you all.

Flying High

Mike Greenwood

In the days leading up to Wednesday 19th July 2006 WeatherJack had been predicting an unusually high cloudbase. I doubted that the predicted 10,000 foot cloudbase would materialize, but it looked like being a good day, so it seemed a good opportunity to do my cross country diploma part two, which is a 100 km triangle at over 65 kph.

On the day the sky looked good, so I rigged the 18.8 meter Open Cirrus CEA and put the task Mynd - Shelton Water Tower - Leominster - Mynd into the GPS and logger. Several other private owners had plans for cross-country tasks, so we all helped each other get ready.

It was a lovely sunny day with initially little cloud, though a fairly stiff easterly breeze. The course were doing circuits, no-one was soaring, so we all waited, helping at the launch point. After lunch the course were still doing circuits. Although the sky looked booming and the cloudbase was obviously very high, no-one was soaring. Eventually I decided to have a go anyway, and launched at 3 pm.

We were launching to the north, so the launch was not particularly high. I headed towards the gully hoping for some wind shadow to kick off a thermal. After a little scrabbling I hit a strong thermal and started to climb fast, drifting westward over the ridge. At 3,500 feet above site I broke off the climb, which was still going strong, and flew south to go across the start line at 3,000 feet and headed for Shrewsbury water tower. There were some good looking clouds over Shrewsbury, I aimed to get there and get a good climb, but immediately started sinking like a stone losing 1000 feet in 3 kilometers.

Every few minutes I heard someone call downwind to the Mynd, so I guessed that conditions low down were still difficult, and that I needed to stay high. I was hitting a lot of sink and no thermals, so when I got down to 2,000 above site at the north end of the Mynd I took another climb, drifting westward quite rapidly. At 6,000 feet QNH (Above sea level) I broke off as I was drifting too far off track and headed upwind. There was a large cloud over Shrewsbury that looked good, so I headed for it and hit enormous lift. It was a truly monster thermal, but very narrow. As I climbed through 6,000 feet QNH the clouds above me still looked as high as they do from the ground on a good day.

The memory that will always stay with me from this flight is climbing through 8,000 feet QNH virtually standing the Cirrus on its wingtip to stay in the thermal with the vario off the scale, watching the altimeter hand winding up faster than a second hand on a clock. It was better than the thermals over Jaca in February.

At that point I heard yet another downwind call from the Mynd, so partly to be helpful, and partly to annoy anyone still doing circuits, I called 'Mynd Gliders, Charlie Echo Alpha over Shrewsbury, 10 up going through 7,000 feet above site'.

I eventually hit cloudbase at 9,200 feet QNH, and went round the turning point to head down the A49 towards Leominster. I had to rely on the GPS to go round the turning point. Although the visibility was very good, I couldn't make out the water tower 9,000 feet below.

The view during the glide was stunning as there was very little cloud, I could see all over Midlands, North Wales and over to Birmingham. Despite flying under all the promising looking clouds there was only sink. After 15 minutes I had lost almost 4,000 feet in 24 kilometers, so when I found a weak climb over Church Stretton I gained some height and headed towards a promising cloud over Ludlow that slowly but eventually got me up to 8,500 feet QNH, which was enough to get me round the Leominster turning point and back to the Mynd. I didn't manage 65 kph as I had to spend so long climbing.

I hung around at low level for a few minutes, but the thermals were weak and difficult. On landing I was amazed to find that not only had no-one else except JS managed to do anything other than a circuit, but that many people had not even flown.

It was a flight I will remember for the rest of my life, climbing in a thermal over Shrewsbury wondering if I was going to need oxygen, the enormous space between the ground below and the clouds above, and the view from 9,000 feet with all the clouds above me, and not a wave bar in sight.

Euroglide (Eurodrive?) 2006 – Some Flying Took Place – Part 1

Paul Garnham

This year Julian Fack has written two pieces about Euroglide, the first setting out the nature of the competition and more recently a summary of our rather dismal performance this time. In theory we ought to have been getting better at this game. This was our fourth Euroglide, so we know the ropes (although the rules sometimes perplex us) and we are becoming increasingly familiar with the German and French gliding scenes, having visited many airfields and gliding clubs. On this occasion we were flying Julian's Duo Turbo G-DDJF and we had the added advantage of TomTom to aid retrieves and to seek out food and other necessities. We had umpteen GPSs and several examples of soaring software. In addition we had the latest Jeppesen charts including those produced specifically for glider pilots in Germany and which contain enhanced information about gliding sites. Getting lost was simply not on the cards.

Sunday 11 June

Up early and away from the B & B near Dover and onto the super Norfolk Lines ferry "Delft". Calm seas and a pleasant breakfast. Julian passed the time by calibrating the ship's rolling toaster, consuming a fair quantity of sliced white in the process. On arrival at Dunkerque, the sky was blue and it was hot. Wilting somewhat, we arrived at Eindhoven in mid-afternoon, and gratefully collapsed into our cool overnight accommodation, courtesy of the Royal Dutch Air Force. As I have explained before, the Eindhoven Gliding Club is on a military base at Eindhoven airport, so a degree of security is evident, but the accommodation was certainly worth any inconvenience on that score. We ate well in a modern suburban centre and were glad of TomTom to steer us back to base. At the usual evening briefing we met the only other UK competitor Rory O'Connor (DG800) and his crew from Sutton Bank (he came second in Enterprise at the Mynd in 2005), but there were many familiar faces including Irene and Ronald, regular visitors to the Mynd with the Dutch "wave" group.

Monday 12 June

It was blue again. At briefing we heard that we were to fly clockwise around the course and that the next few days would be blue. The grid of 42 gliders was set up by noon. TV and radio crews roamed the fleet. Julian gave an extensive interview to the local radio station. I was warned not to take photos for reasons of security, a wholly unjustified restriction in view of the recently constructed "spotter's viewpoints" on two large artificial hills just over the fence! At about 1300 Julian and I aerotowed to 600 m and set off for the edge of the Eindhoven zone. It is not possible to climb significantly until leaving the zone at Leende, some 15 km to the south. At this point we were obliged to test the engine (and hence its effect on the logger trace) but it refused to start. We lost 600 feet during that episode but were soon climbing quite well with some large gaggles, but only to 4000 feet at best. It certainly concentrates the mind when there are 15 gliders competing for the same thermal in a usable band not much more than 2000 feet deep. Progress to the Dutch border at Venlo was rather slow but we were well up with the fleet as we crossed the Rhine near a power station that brought back memories of an earlier Euroglide struggle, while going in the opposite direction. Across the Rhine progress became slower as thermals began to fail and we were soon low to the south of Ahaus, a small settlement north of the Ruhr. Not a sensible moment to erect the engine, given its earlier refusal. Time to pick a field, and no suitable cut grass in sight. An arable field with a sparse crop seemed the best on offer and it turned out to be maize, only about 20 cm in height. We took out about a dozen plants as we came quickly to rest in the soft soil, about 200 m from a lane. After a while a lad with a tractor appeared on the lane, and a few locals also turned up. They spoke no English and unfortunately our German did not extend to "Would you be so good as to tow the glider to the edge of the field with your fine tractor?" Julian sketched it all out and we were soon on our way, the tractor destroying many maize plants in the process. No-one seemed to mind and a jolly atmosphere prevailed. We had texted our position to Nick Heriz Smith and Richard Hinley and they soon arrived. Unfortunately there was a ditch between the field and the lane but we managed to bridge it with the trailer and de-rigging was no problem. I gave the lad a €50 note. He seemed overjoyed, kissed it passionately and pocketed it quickly, presumably before the boss arrived. Over a beer or two at Ahaus a discussion ensued about where to tow the glider. The

rules allow 350 km forward movement by road or engine over the competition as a whole, and on this occasion we could have used up to 100 km. However at briefing it had been emphasised how tricky the leg into Switzerland was going to be, so we were determined to save our kilometres for later, a tactical error as it turned out. We decided to trail to Dinslaken airfield, (home of the factory producing Extra aerobatic aircraft). We had visited it before, and were confident that we could get a tow there. Last time it was behind a CT microlight. This displacement involved a degree of sideways movement and also a bit of backtracking. We arrived at dusk. We were surprised to find that a large hangar of six elements had been built since our last visit, each one inhabited by a separate club, motorgliding, gliding, ultralights etc. We made camp near the hangars. We had flown only around 150 km that day.

Tuesday 13 June

In the morning the man in the tower confirmed that a tow would be possible later and we were then surprised to meet Rory O'Connor, who had fared less well than ourselves, having fired up his self-launcher over the Rhine. As soon as it became soarable he left, determined to back-track to the Rhine, before setting off towards Neustadt Glewe, north-west of Berlin. We did not see him again and later were surprised (and dismayed) to discover that he had dashed around the course by the following Sunday, despite his team crashing the trailer en route. In retrospect this was a key moment in that a delay of only 2-3 hours made the difference between staying in soarable weather and getting trapped by the advancing grot. While we waited, Julian examined the misbehaving engine. The plugs indicated an over-rich mixture, a situation confirmed by an engineer at the airfield. Julian resolved that it might be use of the primer that was resulting in an over-rich mixture so planned to test the engine without using any priming at all. We were promised a tow by lunchtime and Nick and Richard departed behind a Robin tug at 1245. They reported blue thermals to 4500 feet QNH and were making good progress. The engine had failed its mandatory test again, but later in the day it worked! Julian and I had some difficulty finding someone to pay for the tow and eventually I posted some cash and a thankyou through a letterbox. Sucking ice lollies in a temperature of 30° C we set off towards Hanover and then towards Soltau. We heard a radio call to the effect that conditions had deteriorated and that they expected to land at Höpen, near Schneverdingen. Eventually we found it, a splendid old club hidden away in the pine trees on Lüneberg Heath. Members of a visiting club were present and several of the resident pilots spoke good English. As often happens in Germany we were made most welcome and the club's facilities were put at our disposal. The airfield appeared to be a part of a much larger former Luftwaffe base, and we were told that Hanna Reitsch and Wolf Hirth had spent time there. A look at the internet weather suggested that we might make the next turnpoint (Neustadt Glewe, north west of Berlin) on Wednesday. 280 km flown that day.

Wednesday 14 June

By 0900 it was already hot and blue. Deer and hares passed by. The visiting pilots departed and we were presented with their left-over, a fine rhubarb flan. We towed the Duo out at 1100 and the locals set the winch up. It was our first launch on plasma rope. Two other gliders came for a launch so that was encouraging. Julian and I took a launch to about 300 m, the smoothest we have ever encountered, to find poor visibility and fitful thermals. After struggling for what seemed ages over the old airfield we gave up and landed back at Höpen. After lunch we tried again and this time there were "better" thermals, reaching the dizzy heights of 1500-2200 feet and a few Cu, some looking a bit menacing. We set off on track but the going was slow. Over Lüneberg a very large Cu lured us in, but it evaporated at a rate that I had never before witnessed, and we subsided over the city, heading for the welcome Lüneberg runway, visible in suburbs just to the east. The place looked deserted but some English speaking youngsters and an older man on an even older tractor soon arrived, and towed us to the gliding club, where we had the customary tour and beer. Meanwhile a thunderstorm was developing to the south. We had flown only 46 km. Being less than 50 km it did not qualify as a competition flight so we had to return somewhat ignominiously to Höpen. We ate at the same restaurant as on Tuesday and afterwards wandered round a local "football fête" centred on a big screen showing Germany beating Poland. It was all very well mannered in spite of the potentially inflammatory combination of "colourful locals", beer stalls and a significant police presence. We thought it best to leave at half time.

Thursday 15 June

The day dawned grey and uninspiring. A storm rumbled away to the south. Light relief was provided by a wagtail who seemed to take pleasure in windsurfing a small piece of wood on the club's inflatable swimming pool. The forecast suggested that we were in the midst of an area of slack low pressure and that things were not likely to improve for days. At this point Nick had an excellent idea and phoned a gliding friend Ann who worked at Airbus Hamburg, with a view to getting a tour of the plant, albeit at rather short notice. This she did and we drove to Hamburg where she welcomed us and we joined a small party dominated by a family group wearing baseball hats with Mama S, Daddy P etc etc emblazoned on them. Maybe they were fearful of forgetting who they were or who their relatives were? They seemed normal enough. Fortunately they spoke good English and helpfully translated key points made by the tour guide. The tour took about 3 hours and was rather exhausting though very interesting. It centred on the production of the Airbus 320 series. I had not realised what a massive plant this is, or that 14,000 people are employed here. Massive new buildings are appearing in connection with the A380 project which is a tad sensitive at present so we were steered away from it. The A380 fuselages are made here and then taken by barge to Bordeaux. After completion, the aircraft are flown back to Hamburg for final fitting out and delivery. The airfield is surrounded on three sides by the river Elbe and the factory has the benefit of extensive docks. We saw two of the very odd Guppies take off, presumably bound for the UK to pick up wing sections (for how long one wonders?). We returned to Schneverdingen and found an internet café. The forecast still looked depressing. Even more depressing was the news that most of the fleet were in the south with a couple of gliders in France already. We had invited our hostess Ann out to dinner and we used the reliable restaurant that we had patronised on previous nights. The waiter hailed us as regulars, unwelcome confirmation that things were not going well for us on Euroglide.

Friday 16 June

On waking, a thunderstorm greeted us. We discussed our options(!). We studied the depressing forecast once more and as depression seemed the order of the day we decided to visit the WW2 concentration camp at Bergen Belsen. It's a grim place yet with a visual serenity due to its careful parkland landscaping. Most of the buildings and infrastructure were demolished soon after liberation, but a few remnants of the huts remain together with the mass graves. The horrors that took place there are all too evident from the exhibits and photographs displayed in the museum. A disconcerting, indeed ironic, accompaniment was the noise of tanks manoeuvring and firing on the long established military camp a few km away, something that was going on there even when Bergen Belsen was engaged on its awful business. Built principally as a detention and transit camp, it was not an extermination camp the like of Auschwitz-Birkenau yet tens of thousands died there, mostly from starvation, disease and lack of medical attention. Among the thousands, Ann Frank and her sister are buried there. It serves both as a fitting memorial to all of them and as a reminder to future generations of the depths to which human beings are capable of sinking.

By this time, and with the bad weather continuing, we decided that we could no longer keep within the rules of the competition, but would nevertheless try to make progress. With that in mind, and accepting the inevitable penalties, we trailed to the turnpoint at Neustadt Glewe, an enormous airfield in the former GDR (certainly over 300 ha in area). It was damp as we arrived and the place was pretty deserted but we managed to find a member of the gliding club who showed us the facilities and the adjacent camp site. I seem to recall spending a wet night there on a previous Euroglide!

Saturday 17 June

The day dawned damp and uninviting. The 0900 briefing was delayed until 1200. We decided that the best plan was to move on again so we hitched up and left with the intention of reaching Goslar. This we accomplished, but finding the airfield was another matter. We circumnavigated the town several times, and even with the assistance of our charts and armoury of electronic wizardry we never did get there. Mind you we did glimpse it from a vantage point high above the town before we capitulated and headed for a gliding site at Northeim. Finding that wasn't exactly easy either. The Garmin says you are only 1 km away but you just can't find the way in. This happens often. Finally we did find it, a lovely secluded site high above the town. A cheery band of welcoming people, including a group of women on

a kind of team building exercise linked only peripherally to gliding. We visited the town and found it to be a pleasant place. As usual, World Cup fever was dominant, with the compulsory big screen in the square. Looking for a meal we were lured into a restaurant advertising a fixed price "Spanish evening". This was of course a German interpretation of what a Spanish evening might be. A local group of earnest Flamenco dancers stamped noisily around while we drank our Sangria and ate various "Spanish" delicacies. The fixed price turned out to be not so fixed and it was one of our more expensive excursions. Normally we reckon to get a good meal with drinks for about €16 a head. Back up the hill to the club where loud singing suggested that the team building was going well, or was it just the weissbeer singing? Euroglide control rang as we had forgotten to make our usual apologetic position report.

Sunday 18 June

The day dawned cool and blue. We were optimistic at last. A Mynd-like briefing took place outside the hangar. Cu and good thermals were forecast (huh!). Gliders were rigged. A K13 sampled the mid-morning thermals as high Cirro-Stratus began to obscure the sun. We waited. Several others flew for short periods including a Bergfalke (yours for €3000) and an ASH25 self launcher. Julian and I took a launch and struggled for half an hour before being forced down. We lunched and took another launch. The engine was run successfully and we set off towards the Wasserkuppe. At first the thermals were pathetically weak and we ran the engine a couple of times. Later things improved a little and we attained 4700 feet QNH. We passed enormous China Clay heaps reminiscent of those in Cornwall, but not being confident of attaining the heights of the Wasserkuppe (3000 feet) we looked for Poppenhausen (close by the Schleicher factory). The GPS said we were there but we just could not see it and headed off for Fulda instead. However some better climbs induced us to fly west of the Wasserkuppe massif and we landed at a lovely little airfield at Bad Bruckenau. To our surprise, although it was only 1600 on a Sunday afternoon the place was deserted, and worse, a locked barrier separated the airfield from the buildings and the road access. However Julian soon found an alternative route down a farm track and the team arrived shortly to rescue us. As Bad Bruckenau looked very much like a weekend club we drove off to Bad Kissingen, a pleasant town where the airfield once again eluded us, being always on the other side of the river, the obvious approach road closed for repairs. We ate a pleasant Italian meal and drove to the Wasserkuppe, knowing that we would get a launch there. We had flown 156 km that day.

See Part 2 in next issue.

Flying at MGC

Mark Sanders

A couple of things have prompted me to pen this, my debut missive to the newsletter.

To start with, a desire to thank everyone who helped me with my first season of cross-country with Rock-polishers (*DC for suggesting me; Sarah for picking me; DD and Rodders for dragging the Discus around the country (and out of fields) for me; Denise for making the glider shine; and generally everyone for their help and encouragement*) and Task Week, which I thoroughly enjoyed, despite the weather.

Task Week was not hugely well attended (I'm sure that the weather played a part) and I suspect that may be because people are intimidated by it. I know I was before I experienced it. It was run competently, but very amiably by John Parry (Director and possibly the only one who understands the scoring), Dominic Haughton (weather), Nick Heriz-Smith (task setting). The "Enterprise" style tasks mean that you only need to go as far as you are comfortable with before returning to the Mynd - so it doesn't have to be land-out heaven, although once the "red mist" descended quite a few competitors seemed pretty firmly committed, if you know what I mean!

Anyway, if you missed it, you missed out - so my advice is to make a date for it next year.

So on to my second reason for writing. During one of those teeny little blips when we were waiting for the weather to clear, Chris Ellis asked the assembled multitude for any thoughts on how to make the flying experience better at MGC. This was not a subject about which I felt able to comment on at that time, but having considered the matter I offer the following thoughts.

I come from the (relatively) "cash rich, time poor" end of the market, and I suspect that there are quite a few of us about. I tend to do my flying on courses during the week (which is why you are looking at my name and saying Mark who?) and the reason is this: I know what I'm getting - eight punters and four gliders in round terms equates to half a glider that will be mine for the week. And that means that it's worth the grief of sorting out business and family around it.

Now the weekend is a bit different - it is anarchy; polite peculiarly British anarchy, but anarchy nevertheless. And it depends on the weather. Its simple, isn't it? If the weather is poor, then you don't go. If the weather is good then you do. But hey, wait a minute, if everyone turns up on the good day, then you are never going to get a flight, so perhaps, it's better to go on a bad day when there will be better glider availability.

So you look at the weather, it's good - you go, and so does every other Joe, and there is very little chance that you are going to fly. In the "Good Old Days" this might have been called "Character Forming" and was a way of sorting out those who really wanted to fly - and I can understand that in some ways this is no bad thing. You can't totally spoon-feed pilots, for there will come a day when they will be alone in the cockpit with important decisions to be made and no-one to rely on but themselves. But with fuel nudging five pounds a gallon, isn't this all a little unnecessarily haphazard?

Stick with me, the rant is nearly over...

But the point is people won't fall for it now. They want more from their leisure time. Paradoxically I reckon you'll see more people at the airfield on a poor day, certainly I hear reports of poor attendance on good days. (Of course, once people read this piece, they'll all turn up on the next good day, and the "cycle of disappointment" will begin all over again - bless!)

So to the "facts" as I see them:

- You can't give a satisfactory "gliding experience" to more than two people per glider per day. I might stretch that to three early ab-initios. To deceive more than this number into turning up serves only to disappoint and to discourage them from coming again which is what got us into this parlous state in the first place. (Sorry, I thought I'd finished ranting - obviously not!)
- We live in the "information age" and most people have access to the Internet.
- We don't rely on good fortune to have the right number of instructors, tug pilots and launch directors on a particular day, we have a duty rota, so why on earth are we relying purely on

luck and random separation to fill the remaining seats with students and solo pilots?

Well, I'm sure you can see where I'm going.

- I propose that each glider has two primary users assigned to it for each day of each weekend.
- That if you are one of the primary users, you have committed yourself to the whole day - from hangar doors opening to hangar doors closing.
- That these slots (free and used) can be viewed in a password protected members-only area of the website.
- That these slots can be pre-booked via Martin - who can confirm that you are cleared for the glider type, whether you need a check flight and that your credit and commitment (see above), is good.
- That your booking will be updated by Martin on the website, so everyone knows who is booked for a particular weekend.
- That you can select your instructor (that will also colour your week selection), to achieve useful continuity.
- That your booking will entitle you to a minimum of 6 units of flight for a fixed fee of, say £50 (£75 for eight units for the DG?).
- That a unit of flight is a winch launch or 20 minutes airtime. Thus you could have five circuits, or one flight of 1 hour 40 minutes or something in-between.
- That the notion of a flying list still exists for all comers, (including the "time rich, cash poor" brigade) but that their names will always appear below the (multiple) entries for the primary users on a particular day.

The procedure on a typical day would be as follows:

- Get a two-seater out and onto the flight line as soon as possible, using its primary users initially to operate the field - probably even before the hangar unpack is finished and certainly before it is soarable.
- Start giving check flights for the single seaters as required and/or trial lessons.
- Get the rest of the kit out to the flight line.
- Offer flights to the assembled multitude giving priority to the primary users for their first six flying units - thereafter the primary users take their normal place on the flying list, though at no extra charge.

The benefits are many:

- That if you are one of the primary users (and with seven gliders, there should be fourteen of them in total each day, remember), you ARE going to get a decent amount of flying - a proper return on your investment of time and money.
- The night before, everyone, instructors and punters alike can see from the website what the day ahead will entail.
- Because there are two primary users for each glider, sworn to be there for the day, then there will always be enough people to operate the field effectively.
- Those people still inclined to just turn up on spec, will know from the website what the likely availability will be and that should temper their expectation somewhat, reducing the possible feeling of disappointment.

Some other things (these could be the subject of future rants):

- Don't even consider stopping trial lessons. In the real world you have to pay a fortune for advertising. These people are actually paying to be sold a flying experience. It's not their fault that we don't do it effectively enough.
- To keep up the interest and involvement of the more experienced private owner membership, then one weekend per month in the season (August excepted!) should be a task weekend. I'm out of my depth a bit here, but we should not assume that Dominic, Nick and John will be available, so we would need some trainee met men, task setters and scorers. I am a computer programmer by profession, so I would be prepared to handle a bit of the scoring and general admin stuff. Is there any interest out there?
- Task Week should be more effectively advertised to the membership, and that P1/P2 lists should exist for the K21(s) as well as the DG to open up the experience to more members.

Well, you asked, Chris!

Feedback always welcome - either via this publication, or else directly to me at mark@proconsystems.co.uk

Task Week Results

John Parry

| | Pilot | Glider | Callsign | Sun 20 | Mon 21 | Thu 24 | Sat 26 | Sun 27 | Total |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------|----------|---------|---------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1 | John Roberts | DG505 | KAW | | | 719 (1) | 283 (2) | 568 (1) | 1570 |
| 2 | Dave Crowson/Neal Clements/Rod Hawley | DuoDiscus | 494 | 148 (1) | 10 (3) | 688 (2) | 153 (4) | 522 (4) | 1521 |
| 3 | Dominic Haughton | LS8 | Z19 | 74 (4) | 208 (1) | 166 (8) | 450 (1) | 523 (3) | 1421 |
| 4 | Julian Fack | DuoDiscus | JF | | | 547 (4) | 81 (6) | 453 (5) | 1081 |
| 5 | Tony Danbury | LS4 | 288 | | | 572 (3) | 231 (3) | | 802 |
| 6 | Mark Sanders | Discus | 493 | 101 (3) | 4 (4) | 543 (6) | 17 (8) | 32(7) | 697 |
| 7 | Mike Greenwood | Open Cirrus | CEA | | 11(2) | 143 (9) | 144 (5) | 390 (6) | 689 |
| 8 | William Brewis | Ventus | 154 | | | 546 (5) | | | 546 |
| 9 | Liz and Simon Adlard | ASW24 | HYD | | | | | 542 (2) | 542 |
| 10 | Allen Reynolds | ASW28 | KGV | 103 (2) | | 318 (7) | | | 421 |
| 11 | Dave Cole/Bob Williams | Jantar | FHV | | | 122 (10) | 26 (7) | | 148 |
| 12 | Dave d'Arcy | LS4 | IV | | | 23 (11) | | | 23 |