

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

Number 127

May 2007

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ROCKPOLISHERS RESULTS

Preliminary results from Round One at Aston Down:

Saturday 5 May was a contest day.

Pundit - Iain Evans (ASW19 RZ) came **First**.

Intermediate - Dave Crowson and Steve Gunn-Russell (Duo-Discus 494) came **Second**.

Novice - Mark Sanders (LS4 288) came **Second**.

John Roberts flew hor concours in the DG505 with Denise Hughes.

Sunday 6 May was not a contest day.

Look for a full report in the next newsletter.

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Chairman's Bits

Charles Carter

Following last weekend's AGM at the club the general discussion raised several interesting subjects to which the committee will give some thought.

Recently the committee had decided that all members and visitors who were over 21 should pay full subscription and full flying fees. Previously anyone over 21 and in full time education had both at half price. It has been suggested that club members who are over 21 and in full time education should continue to have the privilege but that visitors should pay full price. We will debate the issue.

Another subject which led to a vigorous debate was that of increased subscription and flying fees. It is essential that the club makes a trading surplus and does not depend on its continued existence by dipping into the reserves. The committee has looked in great depth during the last few months at how we move forward over the next few years and I can assure you that the decisions to raise prices across the board have been reached after much deliberation and not plucked willy nilly out of the air so as to upset the membership.

Nothing would give us greater pleasure than to be able to announce a standstill in prices but we would be negligent in our duty of care for the club not to take a realistic approach to our future.

Look carefully at the accounts and I am sure you will be able to see where we can make savings so that in future years we do not need to raise prices above a reasonable level.

The subscription for this year is £1.00 per day for a full flying member and less for other categories and I think is remarkably good value for the facilities that we offer.

The club dinner/dance and trophy presentation was held at the Longmynd Hotel, Church Stretton on 17th March. It was an enjoyable and well-attended occasion, our thanks go to Linda Taylor for reviving this event, and organising it so ably. Same again next year?

Our new CFI has soon spotted one of our major weaknesses. Namely, the failure of shows for duty days. Please make every effort to attend your rota days and if that is not possible, to arrange a swap. It is not enough to ring the office and say that you cannot attend. Any failures put undue strain on those who are willing to stand in and it also inhibits their own solo flying.

This weekend sees the start of fully briefed and organised cross country tasks.

We have a first rate team to guide us through the steps necessary to be successful and I recommend all those keen to improve their cross country abilities to join in the fun. Speak to Julian Fack or Simon Adlard and they will point you in the right direction.

This weekend also sees the start of Rockpolishers and I wish our team all the best at Aston Down. The DG505 will be going to each Rockpolisher weekend either competing or as hors concours with a capable cross country pilot in the back seat. If you want to sit in the front on any of the available days you can speak to Johnnie Roberts to book your place. It will not be going on the off chance of P2s becoming available.

Have a successful and safe soaring season and come and fly as often as possible.

It is very good for your flying and it is very, very good for your club.

Ten Years

Ann Parry

We've just noticed it is ten years since we took over the newsletter, at number 67, May 1997. After recovering from the surprise, it seems an appropriate moment to thank all our regular contributors, indeed everyone who has written for the newsletter. Thanks also to David Nickolaus for copying it all this time, often at short notice, and the office team who make sure it actually gets to you.

If you have flying and Mynd related stories to tell we are always interested to hear from you. I'm

looking after club news for *S&G* at the moment, so any news for that also welcome.

CFI's Bits

Simon Adlard

First of all I would like to thank Neal Clements for doing the job for the last five years and leaving the club in a state where there is little for me to do. As CFI I will strive to improve members' training, and flight safety.

As I am sure members are aware insurance premiums are increasing and we must do our best to avoid accidents at the club. There are often many causes to accidents but a recurring theme is the pilot being distracted or under stress. This leads to a deterioration of handling skills, lookout, and situational awareness, which in turn may then ultimately lead to an accident.

This is where we can all help to prevent an accident by creating an airfield that reduces pilot stress. Below are a few things we can do on the ground to help pilots in the air:

- Make sure the landing area plus other areas such as the Vega strip is clear of sheep, people etc.
- Try to clear gliders off the landing area as soon as possible, if safe and possible to do so pilots should push their gliders clear of the landing area.
- Make sure parked gliders, cars, and Landrovers are not limiting the landing area, why not park them on the rough ground?
- Do not launch a glider if another may need to land long or turn in early.
- If you are starting to get a bit low in the circuit don't be afraid to turn in early and land up the field or on another strip. If you are not too busy a radio call to the launch point may be helpful.
- If you are landing in a restricted area and you know that there is another glider behind you then land long to give them room.

Another source of accidents is the unexpected launch failure. Always expect the launch to fail and know what you would do if it does before you get into the glider. If you are in any doubt ask an instructor, it is their job to help and advise solo pilots as well as teaching.

One sure way to get a launch failure is to launch on a lower rated weak link than required, last month we broke 6 white weak links with gliders rated for a stronger link, each strop assembly costs over £50. It's the pilot's responsibility not to indulge in this potentially unsafe and costly practice but let's all try to prevent it.

Lastly let's all try to indulge in as much flying as possible because the more you do the better and safer you become.

Diversification Update

Mike Witton

The area in front of the bay window has been cleared of heather, then levelled and re-seeded. The barbed wire will also be removed from the perimeter. The idea is to increase the amount of usable space around the clubhouse. It should be possible to use this space for a multitude of activities whilst remaining clear of the airfield itself. This could be used for football, volleyball, boule, sunbathing(!) or simply as a safe play area for children. It should also mean an improved view from the bay window itself.

Mountain bikes

This idea has been put on hold due to problems with public liability insurance.

Walking routes:

Denise is busy researching, inventing and compiling routes of varying degrees of difficulty at present.

Any helpful suggestions to Michael.witton@smiths-aerospace.com please!

Competitive Cross Country Flying at MGC - Mushroom Management?*

Mark Sanders

Last time I bored you all was to bang on about how we should have bookable slots for club gliders in an attempt to encourage more people to commit to fly our fleet. Well, two things have happened since then; firstly few seemed particularly moved by my proposition - I was completely underwhelmed by the response; and secondly I have bought into a glider syndicate, so I'm much less passionate about it myself too!

So what's made me put pen to paper this time? Well, good news! At the Annual Dinner I was declared the Club Ladder Points Champion - at least I think that was the title - I was only allowed to keep the trophy for about fifteen minutes and I'd had a couple of beers so I don't remember exactly what it said on it. What I do remember was feeling very flattered - I'd had an enjoyable and successful season in my terms but my achievements were very modest in the whole scheme of things; a little unworthy - my name was about the only one (from the last forty years) that I did not recognise; and more than a little bemused about exactly what I'd done to achieve it!

Let's trace something of the history. In about May of last year I was looking round the club house like you do and discovered an A3 piece of paper which was titled the "Club Ladder". More intriguingly, my name was on it - for a flight I'd done for the first round of Rockpolishers - I still don't know who wrote my name in, but thank you very much, whoever you are. Anyway, I asked around and the general consensus seemed to be that if you did a cross country, you put it on the sheet and you might win something at the end of the year. Always interested in the opportunity to "win something" I wrote up my flights as I did them, and it appears I hit the big time.

I say "appears", because I have never seen a published table of results, even now. I think we are missing a trick here; if this was maintained as a league table throughout the season, instead of just a list, then it might motivate pilots to fly more often in order to improve their standing. Whoever was in second place would surely have had a modest task to overhaul my total, if only they'd known. What I am learning from the statistics put out by the office is how relatively little flying many of the private owners actually does in a year, so surely this would be a cheap, easy and practical proposition to encourage more private owner flying, and of course more fun.

Another competition dear to my heart is Rockpolishers and this is another area where I feel our approach falls short of what is required. In about late January, I typed "Rockpolishers 2007" into Google. This took me to the Talgarth web-site, which gave me all the dates for this year's competition. Now the Mynd has a round, so someone at the club must know something about it, but as I write this in late March, there is still nothing in the newsletter, the club notice-board or the web-site that lets us know these dates and encourages pilots to sign up and get in current practice.

Again I keep hearing gripes about how activity at the club is diminishing, but what can we expect if we do nothing in this respect to try and get a "buzz" going? My solution? A Competition/Cross-Country Secretary, on/nominated by, the committee, charged with:

- Maintaining and promoting Club Ladder flying
- Promoting and reporting Rockpolishers news
- Making members aware of what trophies exist and what they are awarded for; perhaps a "Trophy Cabinet" on the web-site with a list of past winners?
- Promoting Task Week; particularly hooking up experienced cross-country instructors with P2s for two-seater flying in Task Week.

**Mushroom Management: A popular industrial technique from the 1970s - meaning "to keep them in the dark and feed them bullsh....ine"*

Editor's note: Mark is now MGC Ladder Steward. He says: please record all your cross country flights on www.bgaladder.co.uk so everyone can see them. They count towards the Club Ladder. It's quick and easy to do - there are instructions in the clubhouse if you need help.

From the Flying Field

David d'Arcy

Its funny isn't it I could write these sentences every newsletter and it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference! The 17th March was another fantastic flying day although the membership were nowhere to be seen! I think the weather people had given a poor outlook for the weekend. Don't believe them! Predicting Mynd weather is a black art and takes years of experience, so I'm told. Anyway Denise had ten up (that's knots) and climbed to 5,000 feet along with most others flying that day, apart from Johnboy who got 7,500 feet then was grounded for the usual stuff. **N.B.** Den's 10 up was actually only 5 knots as the DG rear vario has a double capacity flask. However, she noted that she was still able to out climb the Chairman - teehee - and made her mile high trial lesson from a west wind launch.

Easter weekend was also good for flying with a few going cross country. Jon Hall ventured up to Oswestry then Bridgnorth on Saturday and a number went out on Sunday, including Jim List, James Fisher and David d'Arcy who both attempted Tims and Simon and Johnboy with John Parry, went on the assigned task of Worcestershire Beacon - Talgarth, then John and John in the DG505 continued on to Oswestry and home. Personally, I'm not sure I would have ventured off on Tims if it were not for attending the incoming CFI's lecture the night before about cross country coaching and practice weekends, inspired by Mike Witton. So if you have not yet heard about this initiative, see page 6, or the notice in the club house, and sign up. But the best news is that Jim was on his 50 km Silver distance to Bidford in the K8, and he made it - hurrah! He landed about two miles north of the club, after probably a tricky flight for so early in the season. Well done Jim.

Mark Sanders has been ably attending to the club ladder, which you can view for yourself by going to links for the BGA Ladder and selecting 'Daily Scores' then 'Midland GC' in the club selection box. This highlighted to me a number of achievements, by Mark, Dominic, Richard J Bennett and Jon Hall.

A warm welcome to Team Mynd for new members John Rowlands, James Bunn, Howard Rutherford (returning), Ruth Lawrence, Samuel Lawrence, Paul Whitaker, Graham Kirkham, and Keith Ellis. I hope you all enjoy our wonderful sport and get to fly solo soon, don't forget to make yourselves known to members and ask for help from us. The weekend just gone also saw the membership open weekend driven by Charles Carter, Chris Ellis and Jon Hall, ably supported by Martin from the office and many members willing to give up their time to help out and show people around. Even I managed to do my bit and got a 1050 to solo and prospective holiday courses for two out of it, as well as making some sense! We also had a solo on the winch by recent new member Bob Green from Bidford, as he was already solo with aerotow.

By now William Brewis will have completed his second weekend of 'Weekend Course' instruction for those pre-booked members who wanted to take advantage of a whole weekend's dedicated instruction by William. I hope the initiative continues.

I think we should also all like to thank Helen for doing a sterling job keeping our bar in order. However, we could all make the bar job a lot less arduous if we returned glasses and bottles and remembered to turn off the dishwasher and lights if we are the last to leave. Let's face it we're responsible enough to fly gliders, so I'm sure a little pressing of buttons once the decision for bed has been made should not be so difficult :-)

It's time to think about the Mynd Task Week again, so if you would like to round off your gliding summer with a week competing amongst other club members for the Task Week trophy let the office have your entry or booking of club glider.

Stop Press - the T21 lands out. But do my ears deceive me? It landed out a second time? Strange but true. For the complete story I think you need to buy Colin a beer in the bar. However, the two incumbents Colin and Roger flew to the south end after launch. Somehow Roger persuaded Colin to turn and head back for the airfield but they didn't make it and landed in the field on the far side of the forestry. Rather than de-rig, they decided to take the winch there, launch and fly back to the airfield. Unfortunately they had a cable break and ended up landing back in the same field they had just left! Thankfully, the next launch allowed them to successfully fly back to the airfield.

Cross Country Coaching News

Julian Fack

The program started on the Bank Holiday weekend, 5th and 6th of May, and we have thirteen aspiring cross country pilots signed up so far, with six coaches lined up to run it.

We plan to set a task on every weekend day whenever the weather cooperates, and six pilots will try to complete it, having spent the morning preparing following a task briefing by the coach. The coach will also fly, and hopefully complete, the task. After the pilots return to base, some possibly by road, a full debriefing will take place, using logs wherever possible.

Sometimes the coach may use a two seater and be able to take a P2 with him, but the P2 will be “going along for the ride.” The coach will carefully monitor the conditions during the task, and will call a halt and order the fleet to return home if finishing looks too difficult. He will not want to oversee a mass landout.

We plan to run every weekend over the summer, up to the week before Task Week, and it would be great if we could attract some more participants. To take part you need the following: Silver Badge, recent field landing training, a glider (club or private) with a reliable trailer and preferably some form of logging (even a GPS with track logging switched on). You have to be willing to dedicate the whole day (not necessarily both days) from early mutual rigging right through to possibly mutual retrieves and finally the all important debrief. If you need to rush off after flying, then choose another day.

The primary aim is to have fun, and also to encourage those who feel in need of a little extra support towards their ambitions, so if this appeals to you, then either fill in the form on the noticeboard or contact me at j.fack@virgin.net

Open Weekend

Jon Hall

The Open Weekend on 21/22 April was a great success. The weather wasn't brilliant but at least the wind was from the south which made ground operations much simpler. We were host to 25 parties of people over the two days and sold and flew 16 trial lessons as well as one course, one Fixed price to Solo and a probable couple of new members. We did 18 aerotows and 89 winch launches and brought in around £3,500 in revenue in addition to the normal club flying. We will be writing to all those who visited with follow up offers of membership.

I want to thank Chris Ellis who worked tirelessly on the marketing and for doing radio interviews over the previous weeks. Charles Carter organised both days expertly and without excitement. I particularly want to thank the membership who rallied behind the object of the exercise and turned out in force over both days to help on the field, show guests around and generally do anything that was required. I believe that in 12 months time when we are counting the number of flying members at the end of the year we will see the benefit. My thanks to everyone who did anything, however small, to contribute to the success.

Annual Dinner

Linda Taylor

The Irish Bingo raised £208.60 for the air ambulance.

Also Peter announced that his one thousandth tow will be paid for by him regardless of length and height.

Jaca - Why Bother?

Neal Clements

The committee have agreed that the Jaca expedition will become a feature of the club's calendar along with Rockpolishers and Task Week. So what benefit does this bring to the club and its members?

Firstly it extends the course season and generates a good revenue for the club which it would not normally have at that time of year.

Secondly it motivates and sharpens our course instructors. The ability to go out and do a month of solid flying in such a fantastic place gives the instructors a really good start to the season.

Lastly it helps members' flying in several ways. You will get a lot of aerotow practice and in wave days the aerotows can be exciting, you will come back with a much higher level of aerotow expertise than you went with. You will be flying for long periods, flights of five hours are commonplace although your eyes can only take in so much staggering beauty in one go.

You will get a lot of thermal practice, early March in the Pyrenees can be very cold and quite hot, a typical flight will be to aerotow to 2000 feet above the airfield then head for the foothills and thermal up to 5000 feet above site and head for the big hills. You will become very proficient at thermalling with gliders, vultures and cranes, all at the same time. Once you arrive at the mountains then your ridge skills are sharpened as you soar and thermal the ridges at 9000 feet above the site. If you are more interested in wave flying then you will be doubly delighted as in March wave tends to predominate. Depending upon the wind strength and direction then the wave will either be directly in the valley or, if the wind is stronger and northerly, the wave will be very close to the mountains. In a strong wave day you will typically take a tow closer into the mountains then climb the rotor thermals till the air becomes smooth. This year we climbed in rotor thermals to 12000 feet above site then sat in a steady 15 knots of lift in climbing air that was as smooth as silk, the only noise being the scream of the altimeter bearings as the needles wound round.

So is it worth the effort? Well it is a superb holiday in a beautiful place but in reality it's the flying that makes it so special. To be able to experience flying like that at the end of winter is a real privilege and I encourage anyone who would like to experience mountain flying or just have a wonderful start to the season to book up and try it next year.

Cross Country Coaching Starts

Ann Parry

Simon Adlard ran the first weekend of the cross country coaching program. We had a full briefing on Saturday 5 May, including met and NOTAMs, with a task set of Welshpool - Bromyard (Ludlow as the alternative). Although Rockpolishers were busy tasking down south, we didn't manage to get away. Light and variable winds, the high pressure of the last couple of weeks still with us, and awful visibility. There was some soaring in the afternoon, and it was a busy day with training, trial lessons, returning trial lessons, and so many members of the public around it was bit like an open day. I'm surprised Martin didn't run out of high-vis vests, I counted thirteen in one group. Congratulations to Adam Harris on going solo. There was a 30 knot easterly on his actual 16th birthday during the week, otherwise it would have been then. Simon's debrief at the end of the day was brief (no flights to analyse).

Sunday 6 May was westerly 30 knots, start delayed by low cloud. Met briefing, but no task set due to strong winds. However it was a lovely ridge and thermal day with much better visibility for those of us around. Not many to enjoy the day, depleted by the absence of the Rockpolishers team. Were people put off by the forecast of rain by the afternoon? We had glorious flying until the rain arrived around 6.30 pm, so there would have been plenty of flying for all, if you'd been here.

Rockpolishers 2007

Mike Witton

The inter club league is a friendly competition intended to introduce people to cross country flying.

Events are to be held on the following dates:

Aston Down 5th, 6th and 7th May
Usk 2nd and 3rd June
Nympsfield 30th June and 1st July
Long Mynd 14th and 15th July

Tasks are set on the Saturday and Sunday and there will usually be a party on the Saturday night.

If you cannot fly on both days it is not a problem - pick which dates you can manage.

The competition has three classes - novice, intermediate and pundit. The tasks are set appropriately for each class.

All you need is a Bronze badge with a cross country endorsement and a glider. Don't worry if you don't have a 'hot' ship - lower performance and wooden gliders are commonplace. This is a team event so you don't need to have dedicated crew - we all help each other.

We intend to send the DG505 to each event with an instructor flying as P1 so if you have never been cross country or you would like to learn some new techniques then this may be the option for you. Anybody wishing to fly P2 in the DG at any of the Rockpolishers events please contact Jon Roberts for further details on 07725915318 or gliderjon@hotmail.com.

So come along, meet some new people, fly from a new site and have some fun!

If you would like to come along to watch or to help crew then please let me know. Email me at Michael.witton@smiths-aerospace.com

Task Week

John and Ann Parry

As usual Task Week will be the week leading up to the August Bank Holiday, so the dates will be August 18th - 26th. Once again we will be running it on Competition Enterprise lines, so it should be a great opportunity for all cross country pilots.

For those who wonder what Task Week is, it is not a week of useful jobs about the clubhouse, though that's always welcome. It IS A COMPETITION INTENDED FOR ALL LEVEL OF PILOTS WISHING TO FLY CROSS COUNTRY. It is where many of our established cross country pilots first tried flying in competitions, then going on to compete at regional, national and international level. Visitors from other clubs are welcome, though typically it is mostly MGC members. A great way to round off the summer soaring season, the week chosen to take advantage of plentiful landing fields. There's a trophy to compete for, and a lot of fun to be had. There are briefings every day with meteorology, NOTAMS and appropriate tasks set, plus the day winners and stories from the previous day's flying. Winch and aerotow launching available, no formal grid, but first come first served/launched.

Some of us have been attending Task Week for many years we like it so much, so a holiday atmosphere. Think of it as the annual celebration of the weekend life of the club. Perfect for Rockpolishers participants, all those on the cross country coaching program, and anyone who loves flying from the Mynd. There are usually club two seaters flying for the week, and all level of single seaters catered for. We hope to see the K6 542 once again flying in Task Week. Maybe the T21 team will enter this year, with own winch for retrieves?