

# MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

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## Chairman's Column

*Jon Hall*

It is just over three months since I took over as Chairman. In that time there has been no uprising of the membership demanding my resignation so I take it that so far I have not upset too many people. I hope that I can count this as a vote of confidence because confidence is what we must all have as we take the club into the next few years.

There is no doubt that it is going to be difficult to continue to grow as fuel prices in particular and our overheads generally continue on an upwards spiral. Fuel costs will impinge on attendance as members, particularly those who live some way distant, will tend to come only when they are sure of flying. But they may decide to come for a few days at a time to get more flying for their fuel spend. This is a good thing as it helps to support the catering and increase the accommodation revenue.

But it also suggests that maybe we should be looking to aim our recruiting at more local people who don't have to travel so far. The Cosford exercise has brought in more than half a dozen new trial members, most of whom are reasonably local, some of whom will stay to become full and hopefully long term supporters of the club. Perhaps we need to look at events targeted at a catchment area of say a 25 mile radius and adjust our marketing to reach them. 50,000 people attend the RAF Cosford Show each year but 90,000 go to the Shrewsbury Flower Show, 40,000 to the West Mids Agricultural Show and another 40,000 to the West Midlands Game Fair. Maybe we need to have a presence at each of them while recognising that each event takes a lot of organisation and at least eight people to ensure it is supported properly.

Of course the other big factor is the weather. I am tempted to be disappointed at the few people that turn up when the weather is poor but in fact this is not always the case. Last weekend, 21/22<sup>nd</sup> June is a case in point. On Saturday we were enveloped in wet cloud all day but there were still more than a dozen people for supper. Sunday was blowing around 30 knots all day, gusting nearly 60 knots at times, sufficient to curtail flying in the afternoon but the club house was full of people, some of whom used the time to do maintenance jobs around the place like filling holes and mowing the grass. But a weather dependent business like ours will suffer when the weather is poor unless we plan to offer alternatives to compensate. One such alternative would be a serious simulator suitable for training that can be flown in the same way as the fleet and with a similar cost attached to it. Booked ahead or used on an ad hoc basis it could make the courses more effective and be a valuable service to ab initios and the more experienced alike.

The other aspect of the weather not to forget is that training doesn't always need wall to wall 6 knot average thermals. New comers and early solo pilots need to get lots of launch and landing practice, as well as planned exercises and these are often best done in near still air or gentle winds. If the weather doesn't look too good for the pundit cross country pilot this might be exactly the best time to get a glider and an instructor to yourself for a large part of the day.

I am confident that we have one of the best gliding clubs in the country and that we are moving to consolidate that position in spite of the difficulties that surround our sport. I am also confident that gliding will continue to be a viable sport and pastime especially as fuel prices make power flying increasingly costly. I want you all to be confident that the committee is doing all it can to look forward and plan for the future.

Don't forget that the committee represents the members and though elected to manage the club on their behalf it needs to hear what the members think and want. Don't be shy to bend the ear of a committee member whenever you have a concern, a thought, an idea for improvements or a way to make things better.

## **From The Flying Field**

*Mark Sanders*

May 10-11: a continuing run of east winds was perhaps the reason why the airfield was so quiet on two reasonable soaring days. Sunday had an improbably high cloudbase of 7500 feet QNH, although it was a tad murky, and a bit tricky to get the first climb off the launch. Mike Greenwood, with Mark Sanders as ballast, managed it in the Duo (494), and made a 140 km trip via HER and HWH. Neal Clements ran an improvers course for five members (Laurent Couval, "Welsh" John Davis, Steve Gunn-Russell, Charles Page, and Andrew Sherrington). They all seemed to be having a load of fun, and generally terrorising the airfield when practising descending on aero-tow! Neal says everyone had learnt something, so it was a great success and an event that will be repeated. Call the office to get your name down for the next one. Luke Sanders is back from ski-guiding in the Alps and re-soloed. Caroline Roberts is back from nannying for the rich and famous in the Alps but now off nannying for the rich and famous in Sardinia for the summer. The youth of today - it must be hell! We have two new Assistant Instructors, Mike Witton and John Roberts. Congratulations to them both and look out for them on a rota near you, soon.

May 31: Dave d'Arcy (LS4 288) decided to brave the weather and flew an out-and-return to Talgarth, which ended up as a one-way trip. Clive Crocker has now joined the swelling Assistant Instructor ranks. Well done to him.

June 4 was a good day. Simon Adlard set ASHbourne-TALgarth (312 km) and flew it in the ASW24 (HYD) and Mark flew it too in the LS4 (288) - and both of them nearly made it before turning back when the route to Talgarth closed in. Ann Parry got her bum into her Pegasus (FVP) for the first time in ten months (don't leave it so long next time Ann) which explained the broad grin when she landed. Allan Reynolds went for an exploration around the Shropshire countryside and ended up with a bit of field landing practice east of the Clees. (Thanks to Clive Jones for getting him back). But the flight of the day was probably the Tim's Triangle (100 km LMW-SHW (Mortimers Cross-Shelton Water tower in old money)) by Jim List in the K8 - for a badge, I believe - nice one, Jim!

June 7: the weekend of dreams. Dominic Haughton set SEI-LEO, but the hoped for weather never arrived. To his credit, he flew IRO-LEO - but that's Dominic for you, mere mortals just local soared.

June 8: frenzy in the club-house (and, from the later reports, in club-houses all over the country). GlideMet had written the fabled words "A good day - don't under-set". 300s and 500s were mooted and planned. We gridded and we waited... and we waited ... at about 3 pm, a small playpen opened over the Welshpool - Montgomery area, which proved to be a lot of fun, but that was it. Hi-Ho!

June 15: with lots of folk at Nympsfield for Rock-Polishers, Walter Baumann jumped into the Discus (493) and flew Tim's (SHW-SHO) in 1 hour 18 minutes at 82 kph, setting himself up for a pot and setting a target for the rest of us.

June 21-21: FTFF becomes FTCH (From the Club House) as it persists it down all day Saturday and blows hard enough (30-50 knots) on Sunday to completely fray the duty team's nerve after four flights and pack all the kit away. A special mention to Dave d'Arcy for mowing the lawns and around the caravans in the teeth of the gale, and another eleven special mentions for Denise Hughes who does the task for the remaining months of the year!

June 23: why is the weather always better on a Monday? Mark Sanders flew (a slow) 201 km (HOB-HEC) in the LS4 (288). Luke Sanders had three and a half hours in the (audio-vario-less, the L-NAV is in for repair) Discus, and then flew field landing checks in the motor glider for his cross-country endorsement. Helen Johnson flew her third (or even fourth) Silver height without being able to claim it for some technical reason (the logger didn't record a valid trace this time). I wonder if there is a case for a briefing on "Flight Electronics". - I can almost see your eyes glaze over as I write, dear reader!

We welcome another five new members to the club; James Eccles, Paul Guest, Rachael Lassetter, Steve Rogers and Jade Walters.

## **The Duty Rota**

*Alasdair Lewis*

Several times now I have heard comments that the rota “isn’t working”. This can usually be attributed to one or more of the following:

- 1) The rota on the clubhouse wall is out of date.
- 2) The duty teams aren’t being listed in the weekly E-News.
- 3) I haven’t received the latest copy in my email.
- 4) It isn’t printed with the monthly newsletter any more.
- 5) The link on the MGC website isn’t working for me.
- 6) I’ve changed my email address and haven’t told you.
- 7) I’ve done a duty swap and not told you.
- 8) The “Volunteer” slots aren’t being filled.

For the last two years I have been doing the rota and every time it changes I have emailed copies to everyone on it and also the office.

I’ve been giving the matter some thought. All the above problems are outside my control yet somehow they seem to end up being my fault (I’m being paranoid here).

So, I have decided to simplify the distribution of the rota. From now on anyone wishing to see the latest version just has to go to <http://MGCrota.com> (capitals not necessary - just used to make it look more friendly) and they will be presented with a download of the rota in Excel format. It is updated every time someone sends me a change and you can see which version it is either from the number on the top left of the “rota” worksheet, or from the “version” worksheet. If anyone wants it in PDF format then it is available from the forum at <http://MGCforum.com>

From July, I intend to stop sending the rota out by email. It is easier for me and it saves you having to tell me if you change your email address, and you can now be certain that the rota you download will be the latest version. If this causes anyone problems then if they let me know I will resume sending emails to them.

This system is as simple as I can make it, and I can assure you that it works for me at home, work and the club, so if it doesn’t for you then please get your computer fixed!

The MGC website has also been updated and should take you to the same place - thanks Jon.

## **The Forum**

*Alasdair Lewis*

Just for the fun of it, and to make the club more visible on the internet, (and also to experiment with forum software and management) I have set up an electronic forum (using commercially available FREE software). It is accessed from <http://MGCForum.com>

It has sections for the public (guests), club members, launch directors and instructors, and I have been asking people to try it out for a few months now. Currently there are 34 members (including one from San Diego who mistook MGC for a car club - still I have had an interesting email correspondence with him and may have persuaded him to have a trial lesson at his local club!).

It would be nice if we could get a “critical mass” of club members to join and start using it (and posting things to it) - then it could grow into a useful resource for members and possibly tempt other people to join the club, or at least publish our existence to a wider audience.

Anyone can access the forum (as a guest) and see parts of it (including the Rota in XLS & PDF format), however past experience with another test forum shows that unless one has to register as a member (and guest privileges are restricted) it quickly gets swamped by people advertising porn, medication, insurance etc.

To this end there is a three step registration process that checks that anyone joining has a valid email address and (hopefully) is human and not an automated program.

Once registered more of the forum is accessible, and as soon as I notice a new registration (and if I can also decide who it is from their email address or username) then I can give additional access to the relevant parts of the forum.

I'm sorry if this is a bit of a hassle, but the Forum logs usually show about 140 attempts each day to break in - including about 3 attempts by automatic systems to create accounts. So far all completely blocked!

So, please have a look, and see if there I anything you can contribute. You don't have to create a login, although if you do it would be appreciated. If you can't see what to do or hit a snag there is a “help” tab at the top of the screen, or you can always send me an email.

## **Task Week**

*John Parry*

Date for your diary, Task Week is at the usual time of year, 16 - 24 August.

It's your friendly flying competition at your home club: a great way to get some cross-country flying, with weather forecasts, briefings with flexible tasks, NOTAMs, someone in control to take your land-out calls and man the radio. It's flying with friends, at a time of year when landing fields are plentiful should you need them, even a trophy to compete for if you're so minded. There is something for everyone from first cross-country onwards. We hope to see you there!

## Rockpolishers 2008 - Nympsfield Dominate

*Mark Sanders*

With the first two rounds at Aston Down and Talgarth producing no contest days, Rockpolishers headed for Nympsfield on the weekend of 14/15 June. We had Julian Fack (Duo Discus Turbo - JF) flying with Andrew Sherrington and Allan Reynolds in Pundit, Dave d'Arcy and Mark Sanders (LS4 - 288) as Intermediates and "new boy" Alex Rowlands in the Jantar, fresh from his Silver as our Novice, (with another new boy (in his dreams) - Dave Cole as crew!).

### DAY 1

Pundit		NYM-SAN-DID-SAN-NYM			145 km
Position	Pilot	Club	Speed (Distance)	Points	
1	Andy Davis	Nympsfield	107.0 kph	340	
2	Doug Gardner	Aston Down	93.2 kph	250	
3	Julian Fack	Long Mynd	854.4 kph	201	
4	Ralph Johnson	Talgarth	102.7 kph	190 (500 penalty)	

Intermediate		NYM-SAN-WAN-SAN-NYM			122.5 km
Position	Pilot	Club	Speed (Distance)	Points	
1	Pete Bagnall	Nympsfield	97.5 kph	233 (80 penalty)	
2	Mike Codd	Talgarth	76.1 kph	222	
3	Mark Sanders	Long Mynd	71.4 kph	201	
4	Stewart Renfrew	Usk	39.8 kph	174	
5	Mike Dodd	Shobdon	70.1 kph	156 (40 penalty)	
6	Stephen Cook	Aston Down	(76.9 km)	83	

Novice		NYM-SAN-NYM			87 km
Position	Pilot	Club	Speed (Distance)	Points	
1	Mike Dixon	Aston Down		314	
2	Martin Talbot	Nympsfield		299	
3	Tony Bartlett	Talgarth		169	
4	Alex Rowlands	Long Mynd		129	
5	George Robertson	Usk		-281 (500 penalty)	

### DAY 2

Pundit		NYM-GLS-MOR-GLS-NYM			98 km
Position	Pilot	Club	Speed (Distance)	Points	
1	Andy Davis	Nympsfield	63.0 kph	125	
2	Julian Fack	Long Mynd	(19 km)	22	

Intermediate		NYM-GLS-MOR-GLS-NYM			98 km
Position	Pilot	Club	Speed (Distance)	Points	
1	Pete Bagnall	Nympsfield	54.8 kph	120	
2	Dave d'Arcy	Long Mynd	(14.4 km)	17	

3                      Stephen Cook                      Aston Down                      (11.4 km)                      13

OVERALL

Pundit

<b>Position</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>RockPolisher Points</b>
1	Nympsfield	465	4
2	Aston Down	250	3
3	Long Mynd	223	2
4	Talgarth	190	1

Intermediate

<b>Position</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>RockPolisher Points</b>
1	Nympsfield	353	6
2	Talgarth	222	5
3	Long Mynd	218	4
4	Usk	174	3
5	Shobdon	156	2
6	Aston Down	96	1

Novice

<b>Position</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>RockPolisher Points</b>
1	Aston Down	314	5
2	Nympsfield	299	4
3	Talgarth	169	3
4	Long Mynd	129	2
5	Usk	-281	1

CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

<b>Position</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>RockPolisher Points</b>
1	Nympsfield	14
2=	Aston Down	9
2=	Talgarth	9
4	Long Mynd	8
5	Usk	4
6	Shobdon	2

## The Back Page

*Ann Parry*

As always, many thanks to our contributors to the newsletter. Items always welcome, and we are happy to discuss ideas for articles, and help get them published. Some of you go straight to higher things: congratulations to Helen Johnson on her recent article in *S&G* about the Dutch week of bungeeing.

Our thanks also to David Nickolaus, who is a key figure in getting this newsletter copied every two months, and has been doing this for longer than any of us care to think.

Jon Hall's E-News for last week pointed out how good June was for flying: "Private owner flying hours were up by 150% over the previous year with a total of 177 hours as against 88 in June 2007. Club hours were up to 328 from 233. Launches were down a bit, but not much, so it looks as though we are all getting better at staying up. Course places are also selling well. We signed up 5 new full flying members last month as well as 12 temporary members. We now have 23 members between the ages of 14-17. Congratulations to everyone who have been working hard to make this happen and to all the members for making the most of flying opportunities. Let us all work hard to convert the temporary members to full members by helping them to have a good experience at the club."

Lynette Causer and Mike Rogers took the Discus to a new flight festival held locally at Walcott Hall recently, an event mainly aimed at the hang-gliders and paragliders. Although apparently in a remote corner of the festival, our lovely glider generated interest. Lynette came back with a key bit of information about paragliding. It seems the pilots assume we all have to own our gliders individually, as they must in order to fly, so think our sport is beyond them financially. It seems many of them don't realise we have a club fleet, affordable membership and flying fees and all the rest. I've always emphasised when talking to them that our sport is affordable, don't be put off by the expensive-looking gliders. But I hadn't realised this implication of the different ways our flying operates, so from now on I will be talking more about the club fleet, how we learn to fly, and that we don't need to own our gliders individually, the club takes care of that. Another aspect I have known for years is that they have to replace their paragliders regularly, every few years I believe.

Some of you may know of my interest in Edensoaring, England's newest gliding club, based at the foot of Crossfell in the Peninnes, home of the Helm Wind (the easterly that blows there, I believe the only named wind in the country?). This has grown out of Pete Whitehead's enthusiasm and love of flying in the Lake District, which he has pursued for over 20 years. Julian Fack has been on a recent week there in May, and also since then, so he has experienced some Lake District flying, with Phil King among others. Edensoaring has a website [www.edensoaring.co.uk](http://www.edensoaring.co.uk) (you do need to register if you want to see the whole thing) and a presence on the national ladder. My brother Thomas Edwards will be hosting the week starting 6 September, if anyone is interested. You may have been at his presentation about Edensoaring earlier this year at the Mynd. He will be flying in Task Week, so you can find out more from him then.

Finally, I had a fright on the airfield recently when I was nearly hit in the back of the head by a K21 wing. I dived to the ground, the person on the other wingtip held his on the ground so my moving wing was high, and I was fine, just shocked. I went for a walk afterwards, made thoughtful. It was one of those silly ground-handling incidents that could have been an accident. All we were trying to do was position the glider at the launch-point by hand. The combination of circumstances included my distraction as I tried to deal with the tow rope tangled round the main wheel, and a downhill slope. I have been hit by a glider in a ground-handling accident in Scotland, and have had a previous close shave with a K21 on the ground at the Mynd, not to mention the two occasions I have managed to walk into the elevator of my glider (yes, it is sharp, and it hurts). So I need to take more care around gliders, which I do usually, but not on this occasion. There is so much to be aware of on the ground at the launch point, before one ever gets into a glider. Thank-you to the wingman for his quick thinking this time. Coming back from my walk I was freshly aware of the sheer beauty of the place we are privileged to fly from.