

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER

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Rockpolishers 2009

Mike Witton

I will be standing down from the position of Rockpolishers captain effective immediately. Dave d'Arcy will be taking on the role for 2009. I wish him the best of luck and hope he will bring about a return to our winning form of previous years. Fingers crossed for better weather next season!

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Chairman's Column

Jon Hall

Next year is going to be a very big one for the club. As we run into the winter season we are already preparing for our anniversary year celebrating 75 years of flying gliders from the Long Mynd. Jan Outhwaite has taken on the role of co-ordinating the many events that are in the pipeline including a visit from the Vintage Gliding Club, Competition Enterprise, a hangar party on the 15th August which is the closest Saturday to the first recorded flight from this site (put it in your diary), an early season open day for our friends and neighbours and of course our own Long Mynd Challenge or Task Week. It will be a busy year and an exhausting one but it will be the best opportunity we have had to shout loud and far about what a good club we have here. I am relying on the generous good will of everyone in giving of their time to make things happen.

Most of the events will include an element of fund raising to contribute to the new buildings fund. Jan has ideas that should help raise some of the substantial sums that we will need to move forward but she can't do it alone. I hope that everyone will do a bit towards selling raffle tickets, organising events and adding to the pot. Plans for the new workshops are developing and I hope to be in a position before Christmas to publish the proposals. Watch this space.

Mike Witton has handed over the captaincy of the Rockpolishers Inter-Club League team to Dave d'Arcy for next season. Mike has done a great job this year in spite of appalling competition weather. I can't remember a season with so few competition days out of our events. Not surprisingly the Mynd didn't do quite so well as in previous years but this is no reflection on the team or its captain. When you only get a couple of competition days out of the whole summer it is often chance rather than skill that determines the result. We are grateful to Mike for his inspiring leadership and hope that Dave gets a better season for his first.

After a damp and depressing start Task Week turned out to be pretty good. As the week progressed we did more and longer tasks and everyone had a great time in spite of one fateful day when almost the whole field landed out. As usual the organising team were excellent, John Parry as Director and scorer with Nick Heriz Smith setting the tasks managed to get the best out of the week even though we had no internet connections for most of it. Control was efficient as ever under the watchful eye of Hazel Turner, with a bar well stocked by Helen and plentiful food supplied by Heidi. We should be very proud of our Task Weeks as they are as good as any I have experienced and are certainly on a par with many a regional.

As we progress into our second soaring season, the winter, we should remember that we are fortunate in having a site that remains open and operating throughout the year. The ridge provides ample opportunity to stay current and there are many days when cross country ridge tasks are possible. Wave is our constant companion and we are blessed with a number of experienced people who know how to get into and use it. Only yesterday John Stuart was at 10,000 feet watching storm clouds pass by underneath. If you are inexperienced in wave talk to them, borrow the portable oxygen kits from the office and have a go. It can be extremely rewarding. But please remember that the airfield needs extra care in the winter. Don't drive on it unless you absolutely need to and then use the Land Rovers in low ratio four wheel drive rather than your car. No sharp turning manoeuvres, no rapid acceleration. And don't forget that using the wheel brake on your glider can inflict damage so plan your landings to avoid having to use it. If we all take care of the airfield it pays dividends next year when the ground dries out without damaging ruts and ridges.

Here's to a fun winter!

CFI's Bits

Paul Stanley

Yesterday saw one of the most promising days of the summer soaring season so far. Unfortunately it occurred half way through September! It did however provide good conditions for the weekend course as run by Neal and Rod. May I suggest that you all build on the task week 2008 spirit, and get some flying in during the next few weeks to make up for the most appalling summer that I can recall since I started flying in 1989.

I'm convinced that weekend courses are the way to go in terms of both pre and post solo training; I include check flights in the latter category. To this end I propose to focus further on booked weekend training, and hopefully do away with the list system completely. This will be discussed in detail at the next instructors meeting in early November; your constructive input will be most welcome. Another proposal is to start the weekend early (on Fridays) and use excess course instructor capacity in order to get you flying more at weekends.

In terms of flying more, it has been brought to my attention that the Discus is sadly underused. I can assure you that you will never fly an easier glider and that if you have not flown it or are not current on it then I recommend you do so. It is also proposed to resurrect the Discus 'syndicate', whereby a group of individuals (5) pay a set sum for unlimited flying. Please drop me a line if you are interested in joining, you will appreciate that places are limited, so first come... Whilst on the subject of the fleet, I would appreciate it if you would ensure that any defects are entered on the defects board, otherwise they are unlikely to be attended to. It is your equipment after all.

You will, I'm sure, have noticed that the winch launching system has been undergoing some trial modification, namely having a parachute introduced into the system in order to prolong cable life, reduce equipment wear and tear and reduce fumbles, thereby saving time. As with any modification and improvements, there are bound to be teething troubles. I thank you for your forbearance; the target for finalising these modifications is the beginning of November. Again, any feedback is appreciated.

Whilst on the subject of winch launching, some confusion seems to have arisen as to whether signalling should be by radio or lights. In my view it is no co-incidence that this has occurred since we upgraded the radios to the present excellent specification. Excellent though they may be, **radios are not to be used for launching gliders.** There are good, long established reasons for using lights. **All winch launching must be done by use of light signals.** If the lights cannot be seen, then it is not safe to launch by winch. If this is the case, the winch(es) must either be moved until the lights are visible, or launching must take place by aero tow instead.

Another operational matter which needs attention is that of trial lesson hangers-on. The previous CFI, Simon Adlard, decreed that these people should not go airside. I have not rescinded that decree, indeed I have periodically had to reiterate it. This is disappointing, to say the least. This is the last time I will be politely and patiently issuing this:

Members of the public accompanying trial lessons are to remain within the confines of the clubhouse.

I hope that this is clear and unequivocal. Anyone who has a problem with that should speak to those of us who were 'privileged' to attend the inquest of a member of the public accompanying a trial lesson some years ago. Those members of the public who are flying are to wear high visibility jackets at all times whilst on the airfield.

Finally, may I remind instructors that it is nearly time for submission of hours etc? If you could send the required information to Martin, and copy it to me (by email) we should get you all renewed expeditiously.

From The Flying Field

Mark Sanders

13 July: A raft of pilots set off on Silver or 100 km badge flights on a day which didn't live up to expectations. Lynette Causer (K6) and Luke Sanders (K23) both made successful first field landings, so congratulations to them.

27 July: Julian Fack always likes to have the best and latest gadgets in his gliders, but this time he really has excelled himself. It's called a "Jonny Roberts". Only available in one size, it is too bulky to fit in your panel and it consumes a horrific amount of chips and beans, but it can be placed quite neatly into the back seat of a Duo-Discus, and it seems to be even better than a turbo for getting you home! Seriously, congratulations to Jonny for winning the Bicester Regionals again, this time in the Open class. I know Jonny would also like to thank Julian big-time for making such a piece of top class equipment available to him. Simon Adlard (with Shaun Dayman as P2) had a day win in the Sport class - the 18m DG505 embarrassing quite a few.

10 August: Well done to Mike Witton and Sarah Platt, third and fourth respectively at the Gransden Regional, although I think they may have traded a place or two for a few more flyable days - what a very average summer we are having!

20 August: Jon Hall is now officially out of mourning for PZ and has found a new bird - an immaculate LS6 (It's very nice ... clouds ... silver linings ... and so forth).

23 August: Congratulations to Luke Sanders on a Silver distance flight of 68 km to Inkberrow, following nervous checking of the traces - a low (900 foot) launch and a high (400 foot) landing saw him just within the one percent rule. His landout was just one of thirteen that day - a club record?

24 August: The DG is once again resplendent at its full 20 metre span and John Stuart celebrated the fact by winning Task Week in it - with a number of P2s, but it seemed chiefly John Lewis (much in demand with his hard-core LWB Land Rover all week). In other news, Ian MacArthur (ex-member but permanent friend of the Mynd) is the 2008 National Club Class Champion after a close scrap with no less than Andy Davis.

Good to see Colin Calderhead back on the hill after a tour of some of the more exotic locations that the World has to offer - you see, Rio just can't compare with a wet weekend at the Mynd!

Congratulations to Mark Smallwood on his first solo. We welcome new member Emily Bates.

DG505 - 2009

Dave Crowson

Now is the time to plan for potential expeditions with the DG505 during 2009. Very shortly, lists will be appearing in the clubhouse enabling members to register their interests. There are three possible outings that may occur, subject to committee authorisation.

1. **Jaca.** This is our spring trip to the Pyrenees, usually in late February or early March, just before the commencement of the course season. The flying is spectacular (see the photos in the clubhouse or ask those members who have been on previous visits). We take the DG and two or more instructors, and normally hire the local DuoDiscus as well. Single seaters are also available for those who are suitably experienced.
2. **Sisteron,** Haute Provence. For many years in the late 80s and 90s we used to run MGC expeditions there. John Stuart is checking out the local situation with regard to medicals, licences and glider hire, all of which appear to be reasonably straightforward. This trip would occur in May or September.
3. **Regional Competitions.** Flying would take place from either Husbands Bosworth or Bicester, giving cross country pilots experience in coping with the competition scene, with excellent Met and Task Setting and flying in company with up to 50 other gliders! This year at Bicester over 1100 km

were flown during a week that at first appeared to be rather poor.

Strength in Numbers

Dominic Haughton

Why we need more members

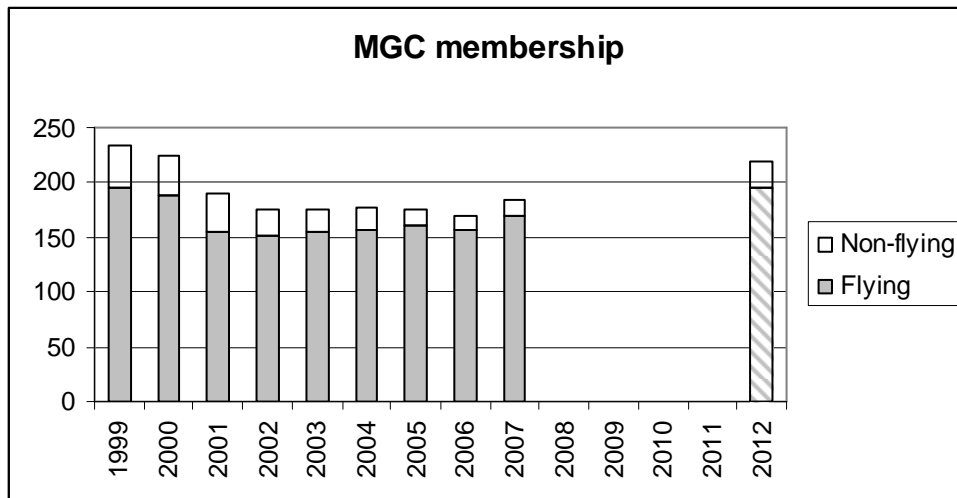
When I joined the committee in April, with responsibility for membership recruitment and retention, I had not properly thought about what might be involved. Re-reading the Strategic Plan, and seeing how the previous committee had translated the club's mission and vision into measurable aims and objectives for membership, soon fixed that.

Six months later, now seems like a good time for a status report; here is some of what has been done so far, and some of what is planned, to meet the three membership aims and objectives. Some of the proposals may affect all of the members, so this article is also a call for input and feedback on these.

Five fives are...?

The first of the membership aims and objective is to increase flying membership by at least 25 within five years.

At its peak in 1999 the club had 195 flying members and a total of 234 members; only 20 were junior members. After the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 (during which the club was closed) membership of gliding clubs fell across the UK. The MGC was no exception. We ended last membership year with 170 flying members and a total membership of 184 (see graph).



The arithmetic is straightforward, costs for roughly the same fleet, staff and infrastructure are being shared between 30% fewer members than 10 years ago. This is why we need to increase membership if we are to be the centre of excellence we aspire to being.

Here today...

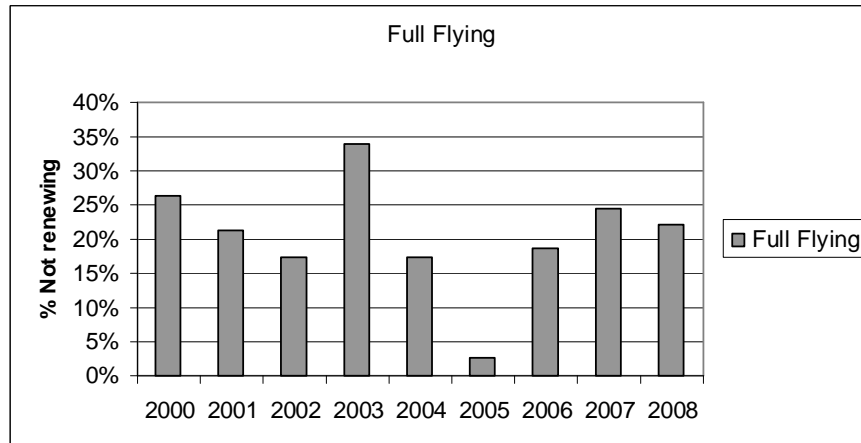
Today we have 160 flying members with 130 of those being full flying (full or country) members; there has been an increase in junior members to 34. To reach the magic number, an increase of 25 full flying members from last year's 170 to a total of 195 before 2012, we must recruit replacements for *all* the members who leave the club *and* add five new members each year for the next five years.

Meeting this target will add approximately £18,000 of additional revenue at today's prices. If we do not find those new members current members will have to find well over £100 each, at today's prices, to keep the current fleet and facilities. And that is without funding any rebuilding or other capital projects that are required to replace essential parts of our 50 years (or more) legacy. More members also means more people to do things, more volunteers for future committees, more instructors and more ground crew. So the task is simple; stop people leaving and recruit more new members! Failure to do so would mean having to scale back our operations in one way or another, impacting our ability to recruit and generate revenue - we'd be in a spiral dive and pulling back hard.

Don't leave me this way

The second of the membership aims and objective is to reduce the churn rate to below 15%.

The churn rate is simply the fraction of the membership that does not renew at the end of each membership year. Historically the churn rate is between 20 and 30% for full flying members (see graph); we lose around one quarter of our all members every year.



For 2007/08 the churn rate was 22%; at the end of last year we had 110 full flying members, 86 renewed. Churn rate was lower than the previous year and, on an even more positive note, all but one of our country members renewed bringing the rate for full plus country members to 17%.

The doctors are IN

One group that we *must* retain are new members during their first year or two. To address this, we now hold regular “Members’ Clinics” on the first Saturday of each month. The first part of the morning session is for new members only, the objective being to make sure they feel comfortable around the club, know enough to be safe, and particularly that they are sure how to maximise the flying they do. In the afternoon one aircraft and instructor is available for new members who are given priority if they have not flown since they joined.

At least one of the committee members is at each clinic to make sure every new member knows how to get the best from their club. Progress books and local rules are distributed and club procedures and facilities reviewed. The CFI addresses flying safety, training issues and local rules and the duty launch marshal covers airfield safety and launch point activity. At the end of the morning the ground syllabus in the new members’ progress book can usually be signed off. Moreover, all new members are now required to attend within three months of joining to guarantee they have had instruction on the basic safety issues.

The meeting is open to all club members from 11:30, so remember the first Saturday of each month is your chance to meet the new members and to put questions or comments to the CFI, launch marshal or committee members. It is hoped that this regular monthly forum will bring issues to the surface in time to address them before they become the cause of members leaving.

Stage right

With the introduction of these clinics, it is hoped new members will meet each other and start to build up networks that will encourage them to make progress and stay with the club. In time we may even introduce a buddy system with volunteers to help each new member through their first three or six months. So with new members being carefully nurtured, that only leaves our current 160 or so members to care for!

To give all members a way of getting to know other members, identifying common interests and sharing experience we plan to set up a members’ board in the club house, with a record card for each individual. The exact content of each member’s record is still to be decided; this is your chance to say what you would be prepared to disclose and what you would not want to post in public! Let me know what you would be prepared to share in the interests of strengthening the community by raising the visibility of

members, their achievements, activities and interests.

As a minimum this will identify committee members, launch marshals, tug pilots, staff and others with specific responsibilities so members can always find someone to ask, or give suggestions to. It will also be a "Stage Board", a visual record of members' training progress, that allow anyone to see a member's training stage at a glance; instructors will be able to monitor progress through the stages, and members will be able to identify new members, their peer group to share notes on progress, experienced pilots to hear how they did it and instructors for guidance. For more experienced pilots the plan is also to include BGA badges and diplomas.

Assuming the practicalities of getting photographs off all members can be overcome, there is much to be said for members' cards having their photos, so names can be put to faces by newer members and others who don't meet often because of when they fly. Beyond that, there are many possibilities for using the Stage Board as a messaging board; for publishing addresses (to encourage ride sharing and buddying), for advertising aspirations (for syndicate forming), lonely hearts messages, who knows?

In any case, I'd like to get members' feedback on whether they would be prepared to have their photographs posted on the stage board, whether they would be prepared to add telephone or e-mail contacts and what other information they think would be useful to share to promote networking.

Family values

Another potential group of leavers comprises younger members who find their time spread increasingly thinly as their careers develop and, in some cases, raise a family. Much has been done recently to make visiting the club a good day out for wives and kids, but we are not yet Alton Towers. This brings us to the last of the Strategic Plan membership aims and objectives.

The third of the membership aims and objective is to attract more social members especially family of flying members

One way to do this is to attract more social members, especially from the families of flying members. We are currently limited by arcane rules of Friendly Societies, however the aim is to increase social membership to 10% of the total membership. Ideas on what it would take to get your family to support your passion for flying are invited.

Give a little

For those of you who have got this far, well done, you are almost off the hook; recruiting and the cost of membership deserve another article. In a future issue I plan to write about Trial Membership, focussing recruiting on Cosford and other airshows, "Introduction to Gliding" evenings and other drives for increasing the impact of our recruiting efforts.

However one recruiting initiative deserves a mention here if only because I'd like to get it off the ground soon. I'd like to have a regular supply of relatively clean and recent Sailplane and Gliding magazines to distribute to target groups, for example to school librarians, women's institutes - the target destinations have yet to be decided. So here is an appeal for members to give up their last month's copy of S&G on a regular basis when the new issue arrives. Any one signing up to the scheme will be given a stack of pre-addressed and stamped envelopes, and a reminder will be sent as required. If you have particular recipients in mind (your old school, rehab. centre or old-people's home) we will make sure they are on the mailing list.

That's all folks

So apart from describing ideas for recruiting and fees for membership and flying that's it! Please let me know if you have any thoughts on the points that affect you, in particular how you would like to use the stage board. And if you are willing to give up your S&Gs (think how happy that will make your partner), let me know or just drop them in to the office.

Dominic Haughton

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What a Waste

Neal Clements

Damaging an aircraft is always distressing and damaging an aircraft while it isn't even being flown is the most distressing of all. I always stress to take care when packing and unpacking the hangar and am diligent, OK, obsessive about parking gliders with tail dollies removed and the canopies locked. However I got caught out by a set of circumstances that are probably worth describing and learning from.

The event I am describing is titled "The parked motor glider ended up with damage to the wing and the fin whilst unattended."

The day started as not flyable because the weather forecast was vile and due to become viler, no one was about, the weather was awful and the few stalwarts around didn't want to fly. However, a trial lesson had turned up and the weather wasn't actually as bad as forecast. Being a number one when it's raining or the sun is shining is easy, it's when it's not quite duff and not quite flyable that life gets difficult. This was the case on this Saturday so after mentally changing ends three or four times I thought we could do a met flight. The unpack command was duly issued to the only club member present and the trial lesson and so we got the motor glider and a K21 out. "Leave it on its trolley and we will put it back" I said to the one club member who was then delegated to get a landrover to pull the K21 to the launch point. We then flew and of course the weather got better rather than worse and we drifted seamlessly into a flying day with people slowly turning up and adding to the numbers.

Feeling pretty pleased with myself I stopped the day before the really bad weather did in fact arrive to be greeted with the news about the motor glider which had caught a gust and pirouetted into the trailer now parked in the hangar.

There are two lessons I have learnt from this. Firstly, always picket a glider as if you are going to leave it for a long time, whatever happens afterwards you will be safe with this strategy and secondly if you are going to fly then declare it a flying day and organise it as such, including leaving the hangar in a fit state.

Task Week Results

John Parry

	Pilot	Glider	Callsign	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4		Day 5		Total Points
				Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	
1	John Stuart	DG505	KAW	19	1	345	4	502	1	392	2	329	1	1588
2	Nick Heriz	Pegasus	FVP	13	3=	274	5	483	2	293	5	218	2	1280
3	Julian Fack	DuoDiscus	JF			367	2	148	9	446	1			962
4	Thomas Edwards	Mosquito	733	9	7	24	9	363	3	349	4			744
5	Pete Orchard	Skylark 4	741	13	3=	378	1	215	5	101	13			707
6	Jim List	Discus	493	17	2	265	6	153	8	154	11	115	4	704
7	Dominic Haughton	LS8-18	Z19			351	3	243	4	76	14			670
8	Dave d'Arcy, Tony Danbury	LS4	288			263	7			219	6	136	3	618
9	Neal Clements, Mike Greenwood	DuoDiscus	494	11	5=	34	8			356	3	81	5	482
10	Richard Bennett	LS4	854	11	5=			156	7	196	7			362
11	Steve Foster	Cirrus	HKC					166	6	117	12			283
12	Adam Walker	K8	KDH					23	11	195	8	19	7	236
13	Lynette Causer, Mike Rogers	K6E	542					18	12	174	9	31	6	222
14	Dave Cole, Bob Williams	Jantar	FHV	6	8			4	13	156	10	4		166
15	Steve Tilling	DG300	206	12	4			49	10					61