

Boost for winter flying

THE Committee decided to try to employ a full-time instructor through the winter so that seven-day-a-week flying can happen whenever the weather permits.

The Talgarth CFI, Don Puttock, is to do the job from January 4 until Easter, and Gavin Wrigley will return in April.

A "new two-seater Grob should be on line soon. It had to go back to its previous owner to have an elevator bearing fixed. We will C of A it before use. K-13 EBL is being C of A'd now and is for sale for £10,000 + VAT.

The committee has also decided to employ a second instructor during the summer, primarily to do trial lessons.

If any club member would like to do this for all or part of the period from April to September, even a week would be useful, please apply to the secretary, Richard Grey, on 07980 597764 or via email on grey.richard@bopenworld.com

If you know any members of any other clubs who may be interested please put them in touch.

Until Don Puttock arrives, in order to provide a more consistent flying programme and enable daily flights for trial lessons and members, the following changes have been made.

Andy and Elaine Townsend will cover Mondays, John French and Chris Osgood Tuesdays, and James Metcalfe Wednesday-Friday. Sheila



Arnhem veteran Jack O'Donovan with Lemmy before his flight

and Daphne will be in the office until at least 2.30pm and aerotow will be available daily. Winching cannot be guaranteed yet but will be available as often as possible. The club hopes to train more winch drivers and increase availability shortly.

These arrangements depend on the goodwill of those volunteering to help and will also require us to spend a considerable amount of money. It is hoped to recover this through extra trial lessons, as there is a large and growing backlog, as well as extra club flying.

Club secretary Richard Grey asked members to support these arrangements and fly whenever they can. You could stay current this winter and beat the February rush. Instructors will be available and if it is possible we will be flying.

● THE Scout has its new metal wings on and, as we went to press, it was being test flown and inspected so hopefully it will be in use soon.

Arnhem 'vet' goes missing yet again!

A 90-YEAR-OLD Arnhem glider pilot had a flight at Nympsfield recently.

He had a winch launch as he said he had vowed never to go behind one of those aeroplanes again!

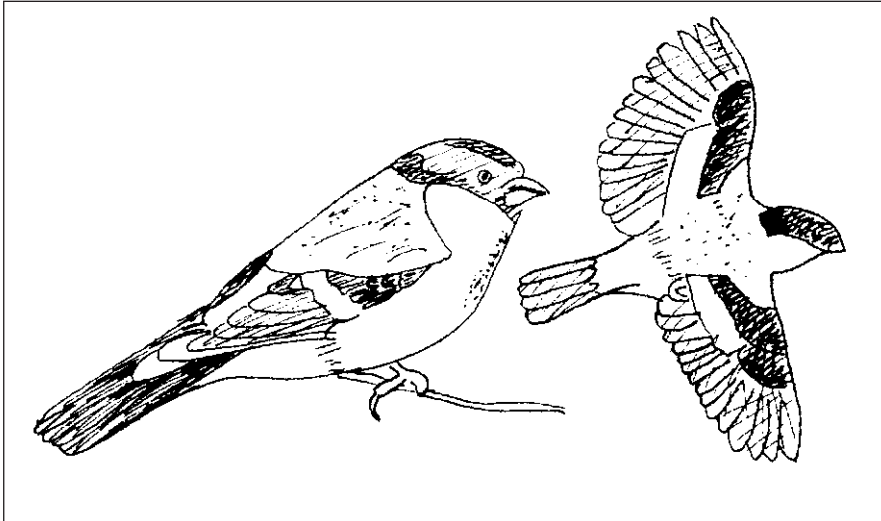
Jack O'Donovan of Hereford, admitted that, having landed six miles short of this intended spot at Arnhem, his troops destroyed their radio and sat tight for a few days before running back to allied positions.

If they had admitted that 60 years ago they would presumably have been shot for treason.

It's thought Jack may have been aiming for Aston Down but got lost. He obviously makes a habit of getting lost – and we benefited from it!

"I can safely say I've never been much for praying before I started flying with Trevor, but now I do it quite regularly!" – Rob Thompson reports on an exciting Advanced Mentoring flight to Wales with Trevor Stuart – See page 7

TFS back in the spring



Daphne Malfiggiani drew this picture of nuthatches. The Terra Firma Syndicate column will return in the spring. In the meantime, keep an eye on the canteen noticeboard, look out for events in 2005 – AND keep spotting wildlife on the airfield!



CONGRATULATIONS to Jon Meyer on coming top of the selection for the British team for next year's Junior World Gliding Championships. "Our" Mark Parker is also in the team.

Nationals

WE will host the Standard Nationals from August 20-28 in 2005 with Lemmy Tanner as the Director.

Club chairmen get together

THE BGA held a club chairmen's conference in October. The aim was to provide a forum for club officers to meet and share experiences of the issues facing gliding clubs and consultation and debate between the BGA Executive and the chairmen on the future of the BGA Coaching Operation. It also provided an update

for chairmen on current changes in legislation which affect gliding.

The chairmen were welcomed by David Roberts, who chaired some of the sessions.

A safety seminar was followed by a session on BGA coaching operations. A keynote session was held on membership motivation and retention, followed by examples of good practice. The chairmen worked in groups on these subjects and later presented their recommendations.

They also had topical briefings on glider insurance and a hire and reward update on club policy and a talk on the impact of EASA on clubs and the BGA's role in this. An open forum followed before the conference ended.

Thanks, Richard

THE club owes a debt of gratitude to Richard Grey, for taking over as secretary after Bob Williamson's death.

Look and learn

TIM Macfadyen has written an article on soaring from Nympsfield for the members' area on www.bggc.co.uk

Old timers meet

PLANS are afoot for a former members' reunion in early September. Invitations will be going out in the new year.

Severn Skies

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Editor: Bernard Smyth, 47 Wavell Close, Yate, Bristol BS37 5UN

Tel/fax 01454 329751; 07813 726245 (mobile)

Email:

b.smyth@blueyonder.co.uk

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Welcome to new members

Timothy Dowd
Simon Baxter
Dawn-Marie Armstrong
Muzzamr Lakhani
Alistair ER White
Dave Quarrell
Michael Hales
Anthony Craythorne
Alison Lees
Gregory Jones
Tim Fernando
Sarah Wilde
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How not to winch launch

By Tim Macfadyen

THE real secret of winch launching, which is easier said than done, is to be relaxed, feel what is going on and react accordingly. The absolutely vital thing is not to get too slow low down while climbing too steeply. A cable break or launch failure at this stage results in a heavy landing (perhaps very heavy) because the glider arrives back at ground level without enough speed to round out.

The worst possible case is to do all the following at once:

1. To prevent a swing into wind during a crosswind take-off you apply full downwind rudder and forget to take it off when the glider leaves the ground.

2. To keep the wings level you apply full into wind aileron and thus have crossed controls as you leave the ground.

3. You now climb very steeply and too slowly at the beginning of the launch. "Too slow" is less than about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times normal stalling speed.

Because you are climbing steeply (and thus loading the wings heavily) stalling speed becomes more than your flying speed and the glider stalls. Because of the crossed controls it spins (flick rolls). This is a pretty obscure case but it is usually fatal.

If you rotate gently at the beginning of the launch and do not climb steeply until you are doing at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the stalling speed you will not have this problem.

For the first third of the launch going somewhat above the "max winch launch speed" does not matter, as the loads on the glider are not high. During the middle third the loads get higher and it is necessary to get the speed under control. For the top third, where the loads are high because the cable pull is nearly vertical, the glider can be damaged so you must not pull the stick hard back while exceeding the "max winch launch speed".

If you are staring at the ASI at the early part of the launch you will probably over rotate, go too fast and quite probably break the cable. You should

look out of the window and allow the glider to rotate gently into the climb, when established at the normal climb angle, if the speed is too high, gently ease the stick back and the speed will gradually reduce.

On strong northwest wind days, when it is very turbulent, rule 1 is "don't break the cable (or weak link)". You don't need a high launch, just a fling on to the ridge. You often see people rotating rapidly so that they hit the violent turbulence just as they are pulling back hard. The weak link breaks at 200ft, giving them a horrible flight through the turbulence all for nothing.

Climb very gently, don't worry about the speed fluctuating between 50 and 80, it probably will. As long as you aren't climbing steeply the weak link shouldn't break. All you want to do is get to the ridge and leave the cable intact for the next person.

If you allow for drift generously the cable will land on the airfield and you won't get "chopped" halfway up the launch or murdered by the winch driver after the cable has been recovered from the trees. Winch drivers aren't physyc. If your launch was too fast or too slow please tell the winch driver as soon as possible, subsequent launches should then improve. Why not buy the winch drivers a beer occasionally?

Safety video on the cards

A DISCUSSION on safety was well attended during the regionals. Chris Nicholas, the Eastern region safety rep, who chaired the two meetings, said that many incidents went unreported because they were not considered important enough.

But if there were enough of such incidents they might point to a subject that needed attention from CFIs or the safety officer.

It was agreed that this matter would be taken up at Nympsfield.

No launch should be too marginal so that at any point, if the power failed or say the cable broke, the

They deserve it and it works wonders on your launch height. This is a slightly more technical explanation of the above, for those who want it:

Modern powerful winches have heavy engines, transmissions, drums and cables. They therefore take time to accelerate and decelerate.

Assume that you come off the ground, in level flight, at 45 knots with no wind and the winch driver maintains power as you rotate very rapidly (too rapidly) into a 45° climb. Some simple geometry shows that you will now be doing 64 knots. If there is a 5-knot wind gradient you will be doing 69 knots.

At 45° climb angle you are now loading the winch, as it is set to give an approximately constant cable pull it will slow down, but this will take a few seconds. You should thus wait and your speed will reduce. If you panic and pull back even harder, the glider will rotate to, say, 60°, the speed will go to 90 knots, or more with a wind gradient, and the weak link will break.

Maximum permitted launch speed is calculated assuming that you are at the top of the launch, where the cable pull is nearly vertical, and you have the stick fully back when you hit a 15kt vertical gust while flying 30° sideways. In any less extreme situation it is acceptable to be somewhat over "max winch launch speed".

So, unless you are in the wave rotor on a howling northwesterly day, don't panic when the speed goes a bit high, just ease back or signal too fast.

If any of this is unclear please ask me or another instructor to explain.

launch would go wrong. Some pilots pulled back thinking they would get a higher launch and got away with it most of the time.

More frequent winch launch checks were suggested and it was felt that Nympsfield could cope with these.

It was agreed the club needed to look into more spin training and spin recognition.

The use of video to demonstrate various aspects of winching was discussed and arrangements were made for some filming to be done in a Nympsfield glider to show pilots some of the problems involved.

How much do you drink?

NOT enough is my guess (and we're not talking about alcohol here), writes Sid.

Over the years there have been many accidents where experienced pilots have made fundamental mistakes during flights on hot days. It is hard to prove, but dehydration is often a likely factor.

Unfortunately dehydration is subtle and varied in its effects and usually goes unnoticed by the sufferer, at least until after the event. However, it invariably causes a significant and progressive reduction in mental agility.

Essential

Therefore for all flights, even on cool days, it is essential to take plenty of water (at least two litres) and to drink at least a mouthful every half-hour whether you feel the need or not.

It is also important to drink a sufficient amount (non-caffeinated) before you fly.

Some pilots are reluctant to drink enough because they are worried about having to relieve themselves in flight. If you are one of these, then have a workable "pee" device

fitted to your glider immediately – there is a wealth of advice and information on this subject, for both male and female.

Want an RT licence?

ARE there any keen cross-country pilots who wish to transit controlled airspace but do not have an RT licence? The licence requires passing a multi-choice written paper and taking an oral exam, both with qualified examiners. The cost for both of these exams is around £70.

The bible for the RT licence is CAP 413, which can be downloaded from the CAA website (177 pages) or can be purchased for £13.75.

Some training is advisable, and once numbers of pilots who are interested are known, we can advise further. We would envisage a number of sessions with either a qualified instructor, plus learning in your own time, or unqualified guidance at Nympsfield (plus a lot more of your own time). Be aware that the RT

Look out the tux
THE dinner-dance will be held at the same venue, Cirencester Royal Agricultural College, on February 12 with the same band, Against the Grain. More details later.

licence can be used in any form of aviation and hence the majority of the information required to pass the exams is of little value to glider pilots.

If you are interested in knowing more about obtaining your licence then please contact me (as a PPL with just under 500 hours, and Silver XC/height, I have been asked by Tim Macfadyen to organise this within the club).

Martin Talbot

Tel: 01454 413332 (home);

Email: mwt2@cliffordtalbot.co.uk

NZ evening

A GOOD turnout of club members heard an illustrated talk by G Dale on flying from Omarama at Gavin Wells' operation. Gavin and G Dale lead the team of instructors there. See <http://www.glideomarama.com/>



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“WHERE’S the best lift, Mike?” Mr Hanks asked. “To our right,” I replied... “Then why the hell are you flying left?” Sound familiar?

It all started a month or so before on a cross-country exercise with the energetic Rob Hanks when we attempted the task NYM-Bicester-Gaydon-NYM I enjoyed the continual barrage of sarcasm so much that I suggested we have a whole weekend of it.

Over a beer or two at one of the Wednesday evening parties, I persuaded Alan Moorcroft, Dave Ascroft and Martin Talbot to also endure Rob’s sense of humour for 72 hours (I couldn’t do it on my own). All it then needed was agreement from Tim and the Committee about hiring the DG for the weekend and we found ourselves heading north to the Mynd on the morning of Friday 24 September.

On tow was the DG, Dave Ascroft’s Speed Astir and my recently-

purchased and jointly-owned Club Astir II. As budding cross-country pilots, and towing the DG, Martin and I left first and got there last – not sure what went wrong there ... still not quite got the hang of the GPS and IPAQ.

On arrival, we were all in awe of Rob’s athleticism as he sprinted to the launchpoint to get those check flights organised. After much discussion and deliberation Rob got checked out, but

no-one else. What Rob said to their Duty Instructor I don’t know but it took until late in the afternoon before Dave and Martin were cleared to fly. Mind you part of this delay was the club shutting down for an hour and a half lunch break during the best part of the day – you think we do some strange things at Nympsfield??

to our amusement! Mind you, Alan was fairly impressive – falling asleep whilst still sat on a bar stool. Saturday was not flyable, which was a good job since the bar stayed open until nearly 2am and we had to share a dormitory with five other souls – pity the poor bloke who had a bunk by the door. So, after the obligatory tea-drinking com-

petition, we took a visit to Cosford Air Museum and dreamt of flying one of the fast jets. Rob gave us all a dem-onstration of how to side-slip a Spitfire (thank God he was not really in it) and then took us all for a curry where he demonstrated his love of a vindaloo!

S u n d a y found us woken at 7am by Alan’s snoring and a low cloudbase and rain! Martin, our resident Met man, tack-

To the Mynd and back (or get us home, Rob)



Smiles all round: The Nympsfield DG crew at the Mynd

Meanwhile, Alan and I shared the DG and after Rob checked out Martin, he flew our Astir. Dave eventually proceeded to show the locals how it was done in his Speed Astir. We all managed to get some good flying in on the Friday with the DG doing four to five hours in the afternoon. Come the evening Rob was determined to show the local publican and the farmer’s daughters his yard of ale skills, much

led the internet and assured us “the front would pass” and how right he was ... by midday all three gliders were airborne, with Dave and Martin ridge running like there was no tomorrow, whilst Alan and Rob went in search of the wave. If you have never had a go at ‘lead and follow’ then speak to one of the instructors – it is a must! Dave led Martin down to ridge height and duly beat up and down a few times, then sank to halfway down the ridge (it is a big one at 1,400ft) and finally almost shot along the bottom – all at over 100 knots. Half an hour later with adrenaline pumping they climbed back to 1,000ft and set off into the wild west.

At six miles out and very low, Dave sneaked over a ridge and found lift, helped Martin back up to somewhere well below 1,000ft and then proceeded to head straight back to the Mynd. At two miles out Martin was con-

Sutton Bank success story

TEN members went on the expedition to Sutton Bank in October and the optimists among them enjoyed six flying days out of a possible eight.

Three of these days had good wave of higher than 10,000ft, two more had weak wave. Five out of six had ridges working.

Paul Gelsthorpe did Diamond height and there were five other climbs of 10,000ft or more. Graham Morris did 23hrs 59 mins in six flights.

The trip was organised by Hywel and Alison Moss, who hope more members will join in next year. Even if the weather’s not brilliant, the beer and food are!

Smile, worry, pray, giggle – a day out with Trevor

WHEN all else fails, pray really really hard A story of a Trevor Stuart/Rob Thompson Advanced Mentoring Flight in an easterly...

Back at the end of March 2004, my Advanced Mentor, Trevor Stuart, suggested a flight into Wales using the forecast 15-20knot easterly. Now this was a novel suggestion as I only really considered ridge running to be a local activity and the prospect of thermalling to a ridge area and then throwing all that height away to fly at below 1,000ft, in unfamiliar terrain, miles away from home seemed a bit dodgy. Especially as you would have to then hope the thermals would still be around to get you home when you had finished playing!

As ever I was filled with the confidence in Trevor's ability (and the fact his two seater – Nimbus 3DT 970 – is an awesome glider and, most importantly, has an engine). This type of flight was just what the

Advanced Mentoring Scheme is all about, so I was well up for it.

The task was Malvern-Cymbran-Hay Bluff-Abergavenny-Nympsfield. The plan was to take an aerotow along the lee of the Cotswolds to see if there was any wave. Then, drift back to run the Malverns for a while then hook up a thermal or two down to Abergavenny, from where we would use hill lift down past Pontypool and then back up to Hay Bluff on the what is affectionately known as the Pandey Run. Then back down to Abergavenny for an engine start ...sorry, to pick up a thermal and glide into wind back to Nympsfield.

So Lemmy aerotowed us along the Cotswold edge and, as there were indications of wave, we pulled off to find ourselves in sink (another good thing about flying with pundits is that you realise that they make the same mistakes us mortals do ... but it just doesn't seem to happen as often!). It was hazy and blue and we drifted off towards the GPS pointer indicating where the Malverns were. We were in heavy sink now and the glide even to the smallest lump of the Malverns was

looking marginal. Now this is where it became interesting, the gliding emotional rollercoaster seems to be all about cycles of "smiling (at cloud-base), worrying (after two sources don't work), praying (that the next source does work), euphoria (when the source works well) – smiling, worrying praying, etc, etc" . We all know what it's like to put all your faith in the target lift source and, as you get lower and lower, your praying takes on a desperate nature. I can safely say I've never been much for praying before I started flying with Trevor, but now I do it quite regularly!).

As we approached this very small lump at 500ft I was praying very hard. Then, as usual with Trevor, the vario

We raced back down to Abergavenny – 28 kilometres in less than eight minutes! Who needs an RAF Tornado!

burst into life and all was well with the world ... however, little did we realise that wasn't going to be our last bit of praying for the day.

We then had an awesome half-hour or so beating up hundreds of waving walkers at between 100-130 knots. Ridge running is just such great fun, but when you have a really large audience, not just the odd rambler or sheep, it really is the best. To be honest with you, I thought that that would be it for the day, the sky was blue, the thermals were rubbish and I thought we would engine start and go home.

After three unsuccessful attempts we got a decent thermal and Trevor managed to turn the massive glider to make the most of its core. Then it was a case of picking haze caps on route to Abergavenny. It still wasn't great but we knew the hills would be working.

Then the gliding emotional rollercoaster starts again and as two thermals don't deliver a low hill emerges from the gloom below at about 2km and I realise how rubbish the visibility is looking into sun.

I check our height and the height of our target destination and think "great,

we are going to see a monster hill looming out of the haze – above us" – definitely in worrying phase. In reality we arrive at just below ridge height with no praying involved.

After that it was great fun (smiling phase) all the way past Pontypool, until the hills orientate a little more round to the south west.

Our turnpoint was an aerial mast at Machen on the other side of quite a large flattish valley. I was looking at the glide as we sat on the preceding ridge in a disappointing zero thinking ... back to "worrying", then Trevor encourages me by saying that it doesn't look like we will actually get there so we'll turn back and get back into the good ridges, phewggggh..., then

we get another hundred feet and he sets off at 60 knots for this aerial!!, me thinking...it's true he is crazy. We arrive just above it, go around it then run back to our zero ridge not having lost a great deal of height, no problem ... big wings and

careful flying ... they're a great combination. If it had been left to me I would have bottled it.

We then race up to Hay at between 80 and 120 knots, only turning to politely wave/gesture to some grounded hang-glider pilots who are waiting for it to calm down. Bless 'em, they did look very grumpy. We turned Hay Bluff and raced back down to Abergavenny – 28 kilometres in less than eight minutes! Who needs an RAF Tornado! I reckon that run was as much fun as I've ever had in a glider. Of course, we did get a brief opportunity to wave/gesture again at the hang-glider pilots on the return trip, albeit a bit of a blur to them, didn't get a chance to see if they returned the wave/gesture. We were gone. Chances are, they were now a little more grumpy!

At Abergavenny we climbed at the Blorenge to as high as we could, which was only 1,400ft and set off back for Nympsfield into a strong headwind with no thermals marked. At this stage I was still smiling because I thought we'd had great fun

Turn to page 8

At two miles out Martin was convinced that a landout was imminent but Dave assured Martin that all would be well – and how right he was as they did reach the Mynd...at the bottom of the ridge. Thirty minutes later they were both back to 1,500ft and off into the West again, this time searching for wave. Dave found it – Martin didn't. With a radio that decided it did not want to play ball any more, Martin was unable to get help from Dave and promptly did his first field landing and was subsequently recovered by Alan on his first solo retrieve.

By 3pm Alan and I had swapped over, and I was back in the DG with Rob, and launched straight into wave ... what a feeling! We kept in regular contact with Dave, who had mastered what the Mynd had to offer and at 5.45pm we were at 8,500ft above Church Stretton (thanks, Dave).

It was at this point that I had it confirmed that Rob was not all there! He proceeded to radio the others, who were de-rigging the other gliders, to tell them we were going for a "final glide" back to Nympsfield. To me it sounded like a "final glide" to some unknown field and a very late night being retrieved ... how wrong I was.

What I learnt in the next 40 minutes is that gliding is an utter release of energy, an awareness of there being something beyond our everyday lives. If you believe in yourself (as Rob does) and trust what the instruments are telling you, you can achieve some great flights. Not in a thousand years would I have even contemplated flying back to Nympsfield at 5.45pm on a late September evening if I had been on my own. Now I have done it dual and seen what can be done, I may one day have a go!

We averaged 140.5kph on that flight and were in the bar having a beer long before the others had even finished de-rigging!

I would like to say a big thanks to Rob and Dave for their support and instructing over the years, and for showing us "how it is done"!

If you are an early P1/late P2 and have never flown from another site speak to an instructor and organise a weekend away – you will learn a huge amount and have a great weekend.

Mike Butters

Smile, pray etc from page 7

out and let's go home. How wrong I was, I've since come to realise that the thing that makes a real pundit, besides the obvious skill, is "tenacity", eg working a 0.3 thermal for half an hour when all others reject it, only to land in a field five minutes later.

There was a very small lump west of Monmouth giving off broken ridge/thermal lift. He just stuck with it and worked this huge glider into beautifully-balanced tight turns and after 20 minutes sweat and a bit of angry praying he did it and we climbed away, me just shaking my head thinking "How did he do that? I would have so given up ages ago."

That wasn't the end of it ... the best was still to come. We were then looking at the map to bounce any easterly-facing slopes to get into a position to glide back to home and safety. It was 5.30pm and we had been flying for five and a half hours. We set off and realised we were west of the hills of the Forest of Dean in a strong easterly, a bad place to be in heavy sink with very few landout options. I could see Trevor's target hill just north east of Monmouth but I still thought it unlikely to work as it was lower than the nearby upwind hills.

We were in mega sink by now which was just getting worse. My praying was getting so frantic that I had started to rock back and forward and beat my chest and head in a rather fundamentalist sort of way, even Trevor was starting to mumble quietly in the front. Then we got round the front of this hill and hit 7 knots and I started to giggle and sob at the same time, shaking my head saying "That is just crazy." He has just shown me what he has learnt by landing out over 300 times in his early gliding career and having the odd scrape along the way, a tenacity that is second to none ... needless to say, he doesn't land out very often any more in his ASW27 (no more than anyone else, anyway). He has gone past all that.

We then potted around the Forest and realised that we weren't going to make it and, at 4km short of Nympsfield, Trevor started the engine without the slightest hesitation. After the previous save, he realised that we had used all our luck tokens for the day,

and he wasn't going to succumb to that pilot hurting pride eg "we've come this far, I'll be damned if I give up when we are this close" – very sensible.

Wow, what a flight, what a glider, what a pilot, what an Advanced Mentoring Scheme. Since then we have actually had many great flights together, either in the Nimbus or as a lead and follow ... now that is really interesting! However I still smile about that easterly ridge run ... funny thing is, so does he!

I (like most Nympsfielders probably) didn't realise what great fun can be had relatively locally in an easterly. There are six or seven club pundits who regularly go and play in this area while the rest of us do the normal NOS-BAS-NYM triangle inland – completely boring and unchallenging by comparison. This Advanced Mentoring Scheme Flight has opened up a whole new area to me, one I am keen to get back to in a hurry, even if it might mean an aerotow retrieve from Talgarth or Usk! Still a lot cheaper than a Hunter flight out of Kemble and much more fun!

Rob Thompson

*[[TIM Macfadyen and Barry Walker made an interesting flight to Talgarth in Barry's Duo-Discus turbo, B20, on October 10. The wind was a touch south of east, perhaps 100 degrees 20/25 knots on the ground and 30/35 knots at 10,000ft.

One-knot thermals to 3,500 ASL made getting to Wales easy from a 2,500ft tow, and a brave soul could probably have done it from the winch.

The Pandy run worked very well right up to Hay Bluff. Two-knot wave to 13,400 near Talgath made getting home easy though Barry got nervous as they approached the hill south of Talgath at hilltop height. "I was nervous too but I did not tell him!" Tim said.

"The engine would not have been any use as either the hill was going to work very well (it did) or it was going to be in the sink of the wave and we were in deep doo-doo (we weren't). A good fun flight and I still don't know if his engine works.

"Pity no one else joined us, though you would have been brave to go without a turbo. Other turbo owners should have been there, despite it not being the classic (NE) wind direction for the Black Mountains."

THE Bristol Hot Air Group and later Cameron Balloons all began in the bar at Nympsfield.

Don had started his flying career by winning a scholarship in the ATC, and later flew Chipmunks in the University Air Squadron, leading to a PPL. He joined Bristol Gliding Club in the summer of 1961, and his first flight at Nympsfield was 25 minutes in the T21 on 11 June. After a period in the States, he returned to the club in 1963. He was an active member, becoming one of a syndicate flying an Olympia 493, comp number 417. This syndicate was notorious for its forthright discussions and interesting practices. Having eight members, one of whom was female, Jane Warter, it was known as Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. He also flew the Tiger Moth tug. He remained active in gliding until he became side-tracked into balloons in 1967.

The Nympsfield bar discussions covered all sorts of intellectual subjects such as hang gliding and ballooning and how to pour beer into other people's pockets without being noticed, and it was ballooning which took off.

One day Giles Bulmer brought up a National Geographic Magazine with an article on ballooning and there was some discussion about forming a balloon syndicate. As a result a number of members went to Dunstable to see a ballooning display at the London Gliding Club. These included Don, Mark Westwood, Charles Meisl and Bill Malpas.

There were five balloons which were to be flown at the meeting: A Montgolfier replica made by apprentices; a hot-air balloon constructed from polythene encased in a string net and carrying a gondola looking like a telephone box, made by students from Bolton Tech; and a professionally-made hydrogen balloon called the Red Dragon which had been imported from the States. This was owned by Leslie Goldsmith and was to be flown by a Wing Commander Turnbull.

The apprentices' Montgolfier replica flew first, making an unmanned

flight tethered to the glider winch. All went well as the cable was paid out, but when they decided that it had gone far enough and tried to pull it back in, the attachment came adrift and the balloon drifted across the field and settled among the parked aircraft.

The polythene balloon flew next, and it split while being inflated. The team leader, a stout gentleman whom they nick-named Billy Bunter, asked

proper hydrogen model manned by a VIP they sent another message saying it could fly; but it was too late. The Wing Commander had already packed up and declined to start again!

At the Dunstable meeting they met Tom Sage, a London photographer with the Press Association. Tom had been previously been pressed into service as ballast for a hydrogen balloon and had later got a flight and become hooked.

Following the Dunstable meeting they decided to go ahead with the syndicate. The members were: Don, Mark Westwood, Giles Bulmer, Charles Meisl, Bill Malpas, Tom Sage and Malcolm Brighton, who sadly was lost during an Atlantic ballooning attempt some years later. Terry Adams joined the group later.

So the Bristol enthusiasts starting experimenting with models after this. They flew a 12ft high paper balloon from under the Clifton Suspension Bridge. It rose up and disappeared over some houses. They followed it somewhat apprehensively and came

upon a small crowd looking at it. Once they had found out that no damage had been done they claimed it back. Bigger balloons were made out of plastic and tried at Nympsfield. Mike Harper (known as Harpic), always one for a laugh, made a home-made pipe launcher to fire rockets at them. But the ones which hit just went straight through without doing any damage.

Once the syndicate were sure that hot-air balloons were feasible they decided to go ahead with the construction of a full-size balloon and each one of the group put down the money to proceed.

They designed the balloon and had the canopy made by a parachute manufacturing company. Malcolm had designed a good gas burner, a design which was not improved upon for many years, and the basket was made by the Blind School. On a trial inflation, tethered at Weston-on-the-Green, the canopy split, fortunately

The Don Cameron story ...

Three members of the Club's History Group visited Don Cameron at his home in May 2004 to get the full story of how Don, a respectable glider pilot, got involved in setting up his successful balloon manufacturing business...

the crowd if anyone had any Sellotape, and surprisingly, someone had. This was used to repair the balloon and after a time it made a manned tethered launch. However, to everyone's horror, including the pilot's, the tether line broke. The pilot settled on the floor of the gondola and made no attempt to use the burner.

The balloon rose quite high, passing over the entire airfield and the clubhouse on the far side. It disappeared into the valley, reappeared once, and then was not seen again, but it was said to have brought down some power lines.

After this it was the turn of the much more competent and prestigious Wing Commander Turnbull to fly the Red Dragon. He was preparing it when a runner arrived with a message from the Dunstable committee saying "No more balloons". The Wing Commander was mortified to be considered in the same class as the previous incompetents and preparations ceased. When it was explained to the committee that the last balloon was a

Continued on page 11

Don Cameron

story *From page 9*

while the basket was still on the ground. A stress analysis was made by Don and Mark, and they designed the modification to give it sufficient strength. The modification work was done at GQ parachutes, and Don also learned a lot by spending a week at their works.

Some of the syndicate had instruction in ballooning at Weston-on-the-Green from Wing Commander Turnbull, who was the only person in the UK who held a CAA ballooning licence at that time and Don became the first person to hold a CAA hot-air balloon licence.

There was then quite a bit of flying of the group's one hot-air balloon at Nympsfield so others could get their licences. The first deliberate cross-country was by Wingco Turnbull, Mark and Don, from Weston to Bicester.

They found that thermals could be a nuisance with balloons. Don was once going into a good field when the balloon stopped, hit by a thermal; he pulled the ripcord and came down with a bang and was then blown sideways by wind going into the thermal and hit a tree.

The Bristol Gliding Club's CFI/manager, Pete Etheridge, eventually thought the public were associating the balloons too much with the gliding, and was afraid that any bad publicity – such as scaring farm animals and damaging crops – would rub off on the Club. So he put a brake on flying balloons from Nympsfield. Don's first commercial enterprise was a joint affair, with himself and Mark Westwood and some of the others.

However, they soon broke up, with Don starting Cameron Balloons on his own. Mark ran Western Balloons for a time and later two others who had owned one of the early Cameron balloons started Thunder Balloons.

The sport grew with sponsorship and now nearly every balloon in the EU has advertising on it, whereas in the US firms are afraid of being sued. This is why most library pictures of balloons are from American meetings.

Don first realised the popularity of

ballooning with the public at the first fiesta at Ashton Court.

On an evening of pouring rain when the pilots had decided not to fly they found so many people standing in the rain in the expectation of seeing the balloons fly that they changed their minds and flew in spite of the rain so as not to disappoint the crowd.

Now balloons have grown in size so

Modellers' Corner

By David Cooper

HAVING a bit of active research going on at the moment for the WWII era, I've often felt that the military gliders of the '39 to '45 period would make interesting scale subjects – both static and flying. Certainly, in researching these aircraft, there must be many captivating stories and tales of great bravery and airmanship.

A good place to start would be the Army Air Corps museum at Middle Wallop. The last time I was there, they had an Airspeed Horsa glider on display. Of course, both sides employed gliders for strategic and tactical deployments – Arnheim and Pegasus Bridge being a couple of good examples. There is a radio-controlled plan available for the DFS 230 (German), but I've heard that it's tricky to fly, as designed, and benefits from some extra work in the empennage (tail feathers) department. For a first German flying subject, I think I'd go for the semi-scale Blohm Und Voss BV40 by Jack Headley (Nexus plan no. RC 1078).

All the British and American types seem to start with the letter 'H' – Horsas, Hadrians, Hamilcars and Hotspurs. Most of these carried infantry, jeeps and light field guns into the battle area, although the large American-designed General Aircraft Hamilcar could actually carry a light tank! Airfix did a 1/72 scale model of the Airspeed Horsa, which should provide a three-view-plus some background history and camouflage detail. The others are a little more difficult to research, I found. However, a good start could be made with some free-flight designs – Nexus, again, published a plan for the Waco Hadrian (FSG 219) and the General Aircraft Hotspur (G 144) training glider. At around 50-inch wing span, they are

that the biggest can carry 50 people, although 20 is more usual and the sporting ones carry four, with other smaller ones carrying two.

Don had not flown a glider since 1967 and it was suggested he might come up for a ride in a plastic glider.

He said it might be possible to bring up a balloon to do reciprocal rides, so hopefully...

both a little small for R/C scale, but, with the aid of a modern photocopier, the plans could be enlarged to a more suitable size say, to around, 80-90-inch span.

One thing to bear in mind when converting free-flight designs to radio control is that of increased flight loads. Although modern r/c gear is very light these days, the servos, themselves, are quite powerful for their size and are easily capable of over-loading a weak airframe – they can exert several pounds of thrust on to a control surface even though they weigh just a few grams. Therefore, some redesign work is advisable. Nothing too drastic here, the enlarged drawings will give approximate section size increments anyway, but, we need to think carefully about material selection and some load-bearing reinforcement bays. For example, replacing balsa spars with obechi or spruce, lite-ply for beefing up the wing and tail mounts, a grade, or two, harder on the longerons etc.

In general, have a good look at all the load paths and trace them back from control surface to servo mount and think about how the flight loads will be reacted back into the fuselage, wing and tail panels.

I think a couple of these models would look good on the slope, and would provide some much-needed variety from the usual foam, glass and floater types. A low pass or two over the gorse followed a "crash landing" (gentle, of course) just skimming the heather, could look most realistic. If only we could get the troops and equipment to disembark as well – Colonel Jumbo, eat your heart out (oops, given my age away again).

●THE club's S&G news correspondent is Bernard Smyth, editor of *Severn Skies*. If you have any news please let him know. Contact details on page 2.

Debit cards to be tried out

THE committee was told that, as a trial, debit cards will be accepted as a method of paying into flying accounts – but credit cards are not acceptable.

Direct debit entries from the bank statement carry a unique identifier allowing easy processing by the

office. It is proposed to trial this system to gauge take-up and ease of use. Trial is ongoing on the basis of £50 minimum payment.

The current flying account system may not adequately deal with VAT on non-flying purchases. Until this is rectified, non-flying purchases cannot

be charged to members' flying accounts.

The installation of a stand-alone accounts package, which communicates with the flying account system, is ongoing. Software has been obtained, but hardware has to be sourced

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