

Chairmen's Conference
29 October 2005
Summary of Proceedings



British Gliding Association



This document summarises the 2006 BGA Club Chairmen's Conference, held at the Soaring Centre, Husbands Bosworth.

Each agenda item is briefly described. A fuller description with copies of slides used is available in a separate document - BGA Club Chairmen's Conference 2006 Report - which has been sent to all BGA clubs and which is also available on the BGA web site.

If you wish to use a presentation for any reason, you should contact the BGA Development Officer to discuss this further.

Introduction and Welcome **David Roberts, BGA Chairman**

David welcomed delegates to the Conference and gave a brief rundown of the planned programme. He welcomed the new BGA Development Officer, Alison Randle, who was carrying out her first official day's work for the BGA. He drew attention to the BGA leaflets, brochures and other materials available for members to pick up. He also mentioned the programme of visits by members of the BGA Executive Committee and asked any club that would like a visit to get in touch.

The first part of the day placed firm emphasis on matters of safety. It did not make easy listening.

BGA Safety Initiative **Patrick Naegeli and Hugh Browning,** **members of BGA Safety Initiative Team**

Patrick recapped on last year's Conference and reminded delegates of the informal 'contract', between the clubs and the Safety Initiative, which had been agreed then.

He then moved on to outline the next steps for 2005, with some simple messages:

- In a review of the provisional results of the last 12 months, 2005 had in all respects been statistically similar to the long-term average of numbers and types of accident.
- The fatal accident numbers of 2004 had not been repeated.
- We need to work to reduce overall accident rates.
- Failure to make improvements may lead to action by insurers.
- In a climate of increasing regulation, gliding needs to demonstrate its ability to regulate itself and to operate safely.

Patrick confirmed with the group that they were familiar with presentation contents and that they were clear.

Hugh Browning took the group through statistics on accident rates from 1987 to 2004 and covered in detail recent work on incomplete winch launches which accounted for over a quarter of the fatal accidents during that period. 14 of the 18 fatal winch accidents involved stalling, either during the transition into the full climb while still attached to the wire, or after loss of power in mid launch. 18 of the 36 serious injury accidents were during attempts to land straight ahead after loss of power below 100ft, usually below 50ft.

Efforts are now being devoted to achieve a lasting reduction in these types of accidents, starting with the production of the 'Safe Winch Launching' leaflet and an article in Dec/Jan S&G, both outlining the main hazards of winch launching and their avoidance. Hugh stressed that to be successful, the safety initiative needs to be adopted by clubs and to result in action in terms of a change in pilot behaviour, i.e. the creation of a genuine safety culture. Central to this must be the sharing of information that can only result from a culture of trust where there is no place for blame. The safety initiative has been enjoying a good working relationship with clubs over the last 18 months.



Management of Very Serious Incidents

Peter Moorehead – CFI, Mendip GC

Pete is an experienced pilot, instructor and air traffic controller. He felt that he and his club had learned valuable lessons from the fatal accident that occurred at his club in 2004. He shared these with the conference, in particular outlining the importance of a 'Club Accident Plan' and gave a detailed briefing on how to prepare for serious incidents by taking simple steps such as ensuring that emergency services have accurate airfield location information.

The discussion that followed illustrated that emergency services such as the police do not always react in a consistent manner to incidents. It is imperative that club management understand what is required of them, the police, and investigation authorities in the hours following a serious incident, bearing in mind that the very people that the club management considers best able to deal with such a situation may themselves be involved in the accident.

Safety Discussion Chaired by Pete Stratten, BGA Chief Executive

After such a thought provoking set of presentations, there was a wide-ranging discussion. Delegates were clearly impressed with the message from the Safety Initiative's work and were wondered what follow up support the Safe Winch Launch leaflet would receive.

The context of the leaflet was described, from the way in which the information is being presented to the careful distribution. Rather than simply being sent out to all glider pilots in the country, it is being sent to instructors first. The important issue of how and when winch launching should be taught is also being reviewed. The question of whether the information could be taken on a road show was raised, perhaps to go alongside Kevin Moloney's presentation.

Delegates were concerned with age related

insurance issues, although discussion of this was deferred to later in the day. Hugh used Lasham membership data (10% of the gliding population as a whole) to reveal that age is not a definite factor in serious accidents.

It was suggested that the BGA develop an electronic safety newsletter; the task of finding and recruiting a suitable editor was underway and using email as a means of circulation was felt to be a good idea.

Finally there was a question on spinning K13's and whether this was to be classified as an aerobatic manoeuvre. The BGA Instructor Committee has stated that spinning training two seat gliders during pre-solo flight training is not an aerobatic manoeuvre. The 10% exemption to MTOM (maximum takeoff mass) applies to BGA gliders only. Where in doubt regarding manoeuvres and loads, consult the glider's flight manual

The next part of the conference looked at various development issues facing the sport and individual clubs. Three areas were addressed:

- Plasma Rope
- Sports Council Funding
- Alternatives to the Flying List

New 'Plasma' Launching Rope – the Experience so Far

Alison Randle, BGA Development Officer

After asking the delegates what questions they have about plasma rope, Alison briefly presented slides prepared by Bannerdown that compared and contrasted rope with steel before moving on to a round up of the use of plasma rope in the UK at the present time. More clubs are now using the rope in a wide range of operational situations. Users of rope are positive about it. These are early days and as time goes by more information will become available. Progress is being shared and recorded via the Plasma Rope Group. The session ended with a brief discussion.



Sports Council Funding

Diana King,
Chairman, BGA Development Committee

Diana outlined the recent decision of the UK Sports Council to withdraw funding from non-Olympic sports. Gliding is recognised by the Home Country Sports Councils and is still eligible for lottery awards at club level. However, the £40,000 annual Exchequer funding paid by UK Sport to the BGA is at risk unless a number of new criteria can be met. Gliding is able to meet the requirements, with one exception: namely that gliding should be receiving development funding from at least two of the Home Country Sports Councils.

To qualify for such funding will require considerable work by both the BGA and the clubs and the presentation outlined briefly the nature of the requirements that would have to be met. The potential benefits of meeting the requirements (local and regional funding for clubs within England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; national development funding for the BGA from Home Country Sports Councils; and national performance and excellence funding for BGA from UK Sport) were also outlined and clubs were asked whether they felt that they would be willing to help meet the challenge.

Is the flying list dead? How can we provide what the 21st Century glider pilot wants?

Representatives of 3 clubs gave quick 'good practice' briefings on this topic.

Two Seater Booking Scheme

John Birch, Cambridge GC

Typically only about 55% of members who join the club (they join for a whole year at the outset), rejoin for a second year. Frustration with the training system is the most cited cause. Cost is rarely mentioned as a problem.

John outlined the successful web-based booking scheme that has been in operation at Cambridge GC for a few years. With two

pupils to every one instructor, the launch point is now a sparsely populated place, yet instructors and pupils are now much happier with the quality of their flying.

Two seater booking scheme

Tim Barnes, Cotswold GC

At Aston Down a fabulous scheme for visitors has been running for some time. As part of this scheme, pupils have an instructor to themselves all day, share a glider with another pupil / instructor pair and can expect to have 6 or more flights.

Tim described the new web-based booking system recently implemented to offer club members a similar level of service where club members can book a half day slot with a designated instructor. Already the scheme is successful with members and instructors alike.

New Members Scheme

James Davidson, Deeside GC

Deeside looked hard at their club performance figures to discover that, over a decade, the club had been quietly fading away. Remaining members and instructors were working harder for less return because there were simply less people to share the work.

James described how the Deeside new members' scheme has evolved over 3 seasons. Initial drives for extra introductory flights proved counter productive, but the club has since come up with an innovative scheme that is both elegant and simple in its design. The results are showing in the club's recruitment rates and the 'quality' of new members who understand the club culture and team spirit.



Working Lunch: Syndicate Sessions

Delegates had an hour and a half to eat lunch, network and go into syndicate huddles to consider a topic of the BGA's choice. Delegates were split into 6 groups and these were asked to discuss 3 topics: 'Safety', 'Sports Council and Funding' and 'Operations and Provision of Flying'.

The atmosphere was workmanlike and happy, this proving to be a most productive session. Many delegates had commented on how useful it is to find out how other clubs deal with common issues, problems and even simply basic flying operations.

'Safety': the first group discussing safety proposed a means of creating safety networks and looked at the means and manner of information flow between clubs the BGA. The second group brought a greater emphasis on training structures and supporting those structures within and between clubs.

'Sports Council and Funding': The two groups were asked to discuss what they could do to support the BGA and what support they would require in return in order for the BGA to meet the new Sports Council criteria. Overall it was felt that clubs would be able to meet most of the criteria, but there were some crucial issues to address. However, if it meant greater funding for the sport, clubs were likely to be willing to work with the BGA. There was some concern that genuine good work would be cancelled out by being unable to satisfy all 'politically correct' points. Despite real strengths within the sport such as coaching, volunteer involvement and age range, as a sport we do not score well in some measures such as ethnic minority involvement.

'Operational and Provision of Flying': One group felt that they had dispelled the notion of a 'typical' club. Types of members were identified, as were packages to support their specific needs. Problems were identified that may make implementing schemes difficult as were schemes that had already proved unsuccessful at some clubs. The second group looked at why the flying list still lives on and decided that the 'if it ain't broke...' mindset was also thriving.

They looked at ways of supporting new members. Both groups recognized that there is a need to take a fresh and innovative look at the operational procedures for clubs if survival is to be an option. Both groups also commented on the patchy use of websites by club. Most clubs have them, but some clubs make more use of available technology than others.

European and UK Regulation – briefing on the latest updates David Roberts and Pete Stratten

The external regulatory environment is constantly changing. The BGA is engaged in negotiation at all levels with the aims of influencing and minimising the operational, social and economic impact of change on individual glider pilots and their clubs.

David Roberts and Pete Stratten gave a detailed and surprisingly digestible presentation outlining the current situation regarding UK and European regulatory developments. Areas covered were the latest news on EASA, other pertinent European issues, age related insurance issues, airspace, CAA and finally a brief overview of the strategic approach and policies adopted by the BGA when negotiating with other agencies.

To achieve its developing objectives under the 'aims' described above, the BGA works very closely with UK Government and European Council agencies, with UK sporting and recreational aviation bodies and within the European Gliding Union (EGU) and Europe Air Sports (EAS). EAS represents some 700,000 owner/operators.

Negotiations are ongoing regarding certification and maintenance, pilot licensing and operations. We will be seeking opinions from clubs as the process develops, so please keep an eye on the website.

In terms of older pilots and flying insurance in general, we are continuing dialogue with the underwriters. It is clear that the key to future success will be a significant reduction in claims.



The following question and answer session discussed insurance – particularly in relation to the older pilot.

David made an appeal for Club Chairmen to assist BGA to find suitably qualified, fresh volunteers to bring their skills to the various BGA Committees. The work of the BGA relies on volunteers and we are fortunate to have high quality and hard working volunteers.

Open Forum

**Chaired by Mike Jordy,
BGA Vice Chairman**

Mike thanked all involved with organising the day for all their efforts and the delegates joined him in a round of applause for all concerned.

Mike then opened the floor to forum. Nothing specific was raised so he asked for feedback on the day. All had enjoyed the day and found it useful. Delegates felt that the day had been better than previous years, as had the workshops.

The issues surrounding consultation of the membership and response by the membership and when the BGA may require its members to respond were also discussed.

Conference Close

David Roberts closed the day and thanked the Chairmen for the work that they do and for taking the time to attend the day.

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