

## Keith Mansell 1934 – 2011



We are sad to report the sudden and untimely death of Keith Mansell at home just after Christmas.

Keith was born in 1934 in Birmingham and educated at King Edward's School, where he had his first taste of gliding in the school cadet corps. In 1958 at the age of 24, Keith joined the Midland Gliding Club, based on the Long Mynd in Shropshire. He spent most weekends there and soon became a leading soaring pilot in the club, progressing quickly to gain his FAI Silver Badge the following year. He qualified as an instructor the year after and became CFI the year after that, holding that position until 1968. He was a member of a syndicate which bought one of the first 15 metre Darts produced by Slingsby Sailplanes. He flew in several competitions, initially in club aircraft and later in the Dart.

Keith handed over the CFI's task only to become Club Chairman, a position he held for 20 years. During this time the Club experienced a number of important challenges, particularly site problems, due to the activities of surrounding landowners. Keith developed a far-sighted policy of buying and securing land around the airfield at every possible opportunity and negotiating good terms with neighbours. This involved a large amount of work and considerable cost, but was successful to the extent that the Club now owns all the land that it operates from, a situation which has eluded many other flying clubs.

Keith married Christine in 1960 and they moved, with their two young children, to live at the foot of the Long Mynd, so that Keith could be nearer the gliding club.

On leaving the Chairman's position, Keith, a qualified accountant, took over as Club Treasurer for a further 8 years. After a break of 9 years, he took over again as Treasurer in 2005. His dedication to the club was recognised in 1988, when he was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Club and was appointed Club President. He continued to support the committee in practical ways and at the time of his death was working on several significant projects for the club. Although he retired from instructing at the age of 70, Keith continued to fly solo and was never happier than when soaring over the Shropshire countryside.

At national level, Keith served for nearly 40 years on the BGA Executive Committee, including 23 years as treasurer. During this time he faced several significant challenges to the financial viability of the BGA, all of which he addressed with professional thoroughness, wisdom and attention to detail. Until his death, he continued to contribute as BGA Company Secretary and as a Regional Safety Officer. He was also a trustee of two trusts set up to provide funds and assistance to gliding clubs.

In 1993 Keith became the BGA's delegate to the Royal Aero Club and was elected Treasurer in 1996, a position which he still held when he died. He was also for many years a Trustee and Treasurer of the RAeC Trust and a member of the RAeC Memorabilia Sub-Committee.

Keith's interests were not confined to flying. He was a member of the Parish Council from 1987 and was its Chairman at the time of his death. During that time he made a significant contribution to local life with projects such as developing affordable housing, establishing and maintaining a village shop/Post Office in a remote rural area and the Dial-a-Ride scheme for local residents. He was also interested in country pursuits and was a member of local shoots for over 40 years.

In recognition of his services to gliding, air sport and the local community, Keith received a number of awards, including the BGA Gold Medal, RAeC Silver Medal, FAI Tissandier Diploma and, most recently, an MBE.

He was never anything but constructive, generous, open minded and supportive of his club, the BGA and the RAeC. His advice was always sought and listened to and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the BGA and of his club was invaluable. Keith's wise counsel, dry wit and constant smile will be missed by everyone who has had the pleasure of his company. Our thoughts are with Christine, their son and daughter, Scott and Crystal and their two grandchildren