



**BRITISH
GLIDING
ASSOCIATION**



British Gliding Association Annual Report 2023

BGA Annual Report for 2023

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Chair Report

Let's be honest, the weather wasn't the best for gliding during much of 2023. Yet, despite the weather challenges, glider pilots continued to show fantastic team spirit, resilience and there were some amazing achievements recorded. To me, this is what makes gliding such an enjoyable sport. Whatever the challenges all rise and tackle them. This tenacious attitude to the way things are done has ensured club development in the face of many societal challenges over the past year. It has been great to hear how many clubs are working to improve their facilities and ensure that their club is structured in a way that encourages participation for newcomers as well as retaining members and growing the club as an integral part of the surrounding community.

Internationally, Tom Arscott became the Standard Class World Champion, a brilliant result against the best in the world. There were some important milestones including Competition Enterprise 50 years and the Vintage Glider Club 50 years celebrations. This diversity of activity is what makes gliding so compelling and vibrant.

Evolving and developing the sport continues to take huge leaps forward, adapting to the changing world and the changing desires of people's free time. Go Gliding, assisted by DfT funding from the Reach for the Skies fund, has shown us what can be undertaken to engage a new generation of glider pilots. Expanding this initiative to aid recruitment and engagement for our sport from people of all ages, genders and backgrounds has real potential to assist the sport across the UK and to ensure relevance. The journey will of course not be instantaneous, but it is hoped that these foundations and initiatives, led by the Development Committee, will help ensure we have a sustainable membership in the long term.

As ever, clubs would not run without the many volunteers who dedicate their time to ensuring safe and fun gliding across the UK. A huge thank you to everyone that gives their time to make our sport happen, as without you, our sport would not be able to operate.

Thank you to club chairs and other club officials, BGA directors and our dedicated team of staff for their continued support. My thanks to Bill Brittain, Richard Brickwood & George Metcalfe who complete their 2nd terms as elected Executive members in February and to Tony Smith who has been a Director for eight years, Treasurer for eight years and Company Secretary twelve years.

Wishing all a safe and fun gliding filled 2024.

Andy Perkins - Chair

Treasurer Report

The financial results for the year ending 30 September 2023 show a surplus of £8k for the year. This compares to a deficit of £1.5k for the corresponding period in the previous year. This surplus has been achieved by an increase in turnover in the year, the largest component of which relates to an increase in temporary membership. This is a welcome development following the recovery from the Covid pandemic. It is usual to see fluctuations in turnover and expenses each year compared to budgeted figures and there are no material fluctuations in the annual accounts which require further explanation.

As with previous years, our financial objective is to achieve a break-even position, whilst maintaining a healthy balance sheet. The value of the balance sheet has increased by the corresponding surplus value of £8k adding to a reasonably healthy reserve total. Within the total reserve figure is the 'international competitions reserve' figure of £85k (£51k at the year ending 30 September 2017). The competition reserve is ring fenced and as international competitions and associated expenditure vary on an annual basis, it is usual to see some fluctuation.

Following the closure of the former Windrushers Gliding Club, the BGA is holding in trust a transfer of funds of £300k and ongoing work is underway to establish the most appropriate mechanisms to ensure the donors' wishes and statutory requirements are met. This transfer is represented as a long-term creditor in the statutory accounts; any interest earned on this balance will be added (less any corporation tax) to the creditor balance. Although the transferred funds deposit will be held separately from other BGA deposits, the balance will continue to be shown within the BGA accounts as 'cash in hand.'

It is important to note, as with previous years, that the 'cash in hand' figure does not represent the reserves of the BGA. The reserves figure represents the excess of total assets compared to total liabilities, of which cash is one component.

Finally, I would like to advise the membership that I will be stepping down as Company Secretary (after 12 years) and as Treasurer (after 8 years). It has been an immensely enjoyable time, and I have made many good friends in that time. I would particularly like to thank Peter Bishop and Liz Pike for the demanding work they do behind the scenes on the finances of the BGA.

Tony Smith – Honorary Treasurer

CEO Report

It's always a pleasure and helpful to reflect on the previous 12 months of gliding, whether that's from our own memories or other's shared experiences. It's mostly about the flying of course, but gliding is also about ambitions, dreams, and anticipation of the next amazing soaring experience or adventure. The physical and mental health benefits are obvious.

The opportunity to use gliding as a medium to engage and interest young minds in aviation was energised in 2023 with our successful bid for DfT 'Reach for the Sky' funding for our Go Gliding engagement and STEM initiative, delivered by clubs with contracted support. Our WinG initiative, currently focussed on increasing participation by women, is preparing for the club-delivered National Women's Go Gliding Weekend of 27/28 April 2024. It's encouraging to see more former Junior pilots now moving into club leadership roles. A huge thanks to all involved!

During 2023 the BGA's CAA Delegated Authority approval in support of glider pilot's licensing needs and our Combined Airworthiness Organisation approval that provide the legal framework for the BGA's airworthiness system continued to deliver and have been successfully audited. We're engaging with the CAA GA Unit on a range of regulatory issues including pilot licensing simplification, ensuring future trainee pilots can utilise the pilot medical declaration, and on the important topic of safety awareness. After three years of BGA spotlighting issues with the Part-66L exams and the associated risks of not sustaining licensed BGA inspector capacity, the CAA has finally recognized the pressing need to address the situation. You can read about our work with airspace regulation elsewhere in this annual report.

The service delivery side of the BGA was as busy as ever during 2023, with safety management, continuing airworthiness, external engagement, club development, licences, publications, certificates and badges, competition entries, seminars, courses, PR events, and conferences all professionally supported by the BGA's small team of resolute expert volunteers, staff, and contractors. Thank you all. As we rolled into the new year, we worked with our friends at the British Model Flying Association (BMFA) to relocate their Leicester-based administration team into their own space within a reshaped BGA office on time and within budget. There are mutual benefits from sharing and diversifying.

Since 2003, developers and local planning authorities have been able to increasingly and, in our view, inappropriately treat airfields as brownfield sites, i.e. available for development. The current economy may slow the pace of land development if not land purchase, but it remains one of several ever-present threats that we face. The BGA strategy and associated workstreams continue to respond to how the member club's needs, plans and aspirations can be best served.

Our structure of independently run BGA member clubs that deliver gliding managed by their members for their members with BGA resources providing the required central support with elected volunteer oversight continues to be a successful model. The membership is well-served by the elected BGA Executive Committee and the sub-committees, many of whom frequently burn the midnight oil to get the job done. If you would like to get involved, please do get in touch.

Pete Stratten - CEO

Airspace Committee Report

2023 has seen the expected increase of airspace change proposal (ACP) response activity associated with airspace modernisation, controlled airspace growth, and danger areas for drone trials or planned activity. There is some magnificent work going on by local groups as well as airspace committee members to understand and respond to some overly complex ACPs. The BGA is hopeful of a collaborative air sport approach to resourcing before the ACP tsunami becomes overwhelming for all recreational aviation stakeholders. We continue to engage with CAA on airspace matters via our seat on the NATMAC (a CAA committee) and with the GA Alliance.

Among the clusters of airports associated with upper and lower airspace change projects, there are aspirant airports that appear to be flying in the face of both safe airspace and environmental realities by pushing to significantly grow business jet traffic in already busy airspace, with other airspace users expected to move out of their way. One airport plans to near double its annual movements and, in discussing 'its' controlled airspace, notes that they constantly struggle to vector bizjets away from other airports airspace, and as a result, a significant and increasing amount of bizjet traffic will continue to transit inefficiently over southern England below 3000'. Competing airports and conflicting national policies on growth and emissions provide a challenging mix that continue to negatively impact a huge amount of people. The CAA's future airspace plans, and airspace modernisation strategy (AMS) aim to address these issues, but we should not underestimate the challenges of delivering helpful change in such a complex situation. The UK's disparately managed airspace does not help. Government recognises the issues and is considering forming an airspace single design entity. Meanwhile, controlled airspace continues to expand.

The CAA has announced that ADS-B is the UK's electronic conspicuity (EC) standard for the future. Other forms of in-use affordable EC technology are effective at helping pilots see other aircraft and support rebroadcast capability that meets other airspace user needs. The CAA is discovering the challenges associated with delivering a future-proofed effective and affordable single technology EC system that can address drone interoperability, air traffic control, and a variety of mid-air conflict needs. Whatever new EC kit you buy for your glider, TMG or tug, please also continue to use FLARM (with firmware update!) to support effective lookout. It works.

The UK Government and therefore the CAA are focussed on drone industry supplied forecasts of massive growth over the coming years and plan to integrate drones with piloted aviation. That's in most part driving CAA's current thinking on EC. Whatever emerges, there's little doubt that eventually both civil and military remotely piloted and automated air systems will be routine users of UK lower airspace in a variety of roles. We need to remain open-minded and engage effectively while defending our access to shared airspace. Working together is important, as is accurately challenging unreasonable assumptions and proposals.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supports BGA airspace work and every pilot who operates responsibly with the needs of all airspace users in mind. Safe flying and our freedoms rely on it.

Pete Stratten – Acting Chair

Competition & Awards Committee Report

2023 marked another year of increased UK competition activity. Some 600 pilots took part in 16+ competitions. I calculate that there were over 3000 pilot tasks flown over 75 competition days! Except for the 18m's and 20m's, the Nationals all had good racing over many days. Congratulations to all our 2023 champions.

Talking of champions, special mention must go to Tom Arscott who became World Champion flying a loaned LS8 in the Standards that were held in Oz in December 2023. More in the team report. Many thanks go to Werner Stroud who, as team manager, makes all this possible.

Rules

One of the committee's main tasks is to review and adjust the competition rules each year.

In a change to normal procedure, in 2023 we asked for inputs to this process before we started. We had over 50 ideas put forward. All of these have been considered along with inputs from directors of competitions during the season.

The sad and tragic fatal mid-air that occurred during the Hus Bos Challenge Cup has also focussed our minds and will result in some interesting proposals that aim to continue to make our flying during competitions as safe as practicable.

In addition to adopting many of the ideas that pilots and others put forward in 2024 season, we will start consulting on some major changes that could appear in 2025. Come to the BGA Conference during February where we will start this process.

And finally

I would like to offer my thanks to Alan Langlands for the dedication, skill, and experience that he offered the sport through many years as part and latterly chair of the Competitions Committee. We all owe our thanks to the volunteers who give so much of themselves for our sport.

If you have been involved in competition, whether as pilot, organiser, director, task setter, scorer, or any other capacity, you are ideally qualified to help us in our mission. If you can give a little of your time to help, please contact me at compscommittee@gliding.co.uk for a chat.

Jim White – Chair

Development Committee Report

This year I would like to start my report with a big thank you to the members of the Development Committee for their time, commitment and skills in helping to support the clubs that deliver our amazing sport. This involves a lot of volunteered time and is not always that visible. The Committee is also supported in its efforts by the BGA Office team. So, thank you all.

The rates team continue to provide very skill assistance and successfully agreed a rating process with the Valuations Office Agency (VOA). David Howse and Pete Stratten met with the Head of Airfield Rates of the VOA in May 2023 which should improve the relationship and better harmonise the approach to rating airfields in a consistent and fair manner. The rates team have been supporting nine BGA clubs with specific rate issues. There may be more work to do once the COVID rates discount falls away at the end of March 2024.

We were also busy supporting seven clubs with specific planning issues including obtaining planning permission and making informed response to proposed development adjacent to gliding sites. We are still keen to see clubs lodging non-official aerodrome safeguarding plans with their local authority as these will highlight any development that might impact operations at an early stage. We are lucky to have the support of Louis Chicot in this area.

Diana King continues to help clubs with diverse issues including fuel management, lease renewals, corporation tax and rent increases. We have also been working in cooperation with the General Aviation Awareness Council (GAAC) on planning issues including the potential impact of a new electricity grid that will support the growth in offshore wind farms. Roger Wilson, who sits on the Development Committee is also the Finance Director of the GAAC.

University clubs (currently 13) continue to thrive ably supported by Emma Burns. It is not always easy to maintain links with these clubs as the students leading these clubs graduate and move on. I would also like to thank the BGA clubs who host the University clubs. These are great for introducing younger people to the sport and we need to do all we can to keep them engaged.

Yvonne Elliott has been very busy visiting clubs to provide support for both Junior Gliding Centres and helping clubs support and encourage their female members. She has visited many clubs and is developing a network of women's ambassadors. There are presently 20 such people in place. We will be encouraging more women into our sport with the BGA National Women's Gliding Weekend on 27th and 28th April. There are early signs that the proportion of women gliding has risen in the past three years from 6.8% to 8.0%, a trend we are keen to continue. Karon Matton continues to deliver very valuable, discrete and sensitive support of safeguarding young people at gliding clubs.

A concerning trend is the total number of gliding club members as reported by clubs in their annual returns. The numbers appeared to pick up quite well in 2021 after the impact of COVID in 2020 when numbers were significantly down but fell away significantly in 2022. A deeper look suggests we are beginning to see the long-expected retirement from gliding of senior members. On the positive side we continue to see growth in junior members, and it is important that we do all we can to keep this enthusiastic group engaged as their commitments expands to include careers and families. In 2024 we plan more club visits to see how we can help them recruit and retain more members. We will also be offering clubs support to review their governance

processes using a tool we have developed which is based on guidance from Sport England. In preparing this tool we have reviewed and updated most of the BGA template documents; an enormous piece of work completed in the main by Alison and myself.

I would also like to thank Alison Randle and Paul Jessop for their work preparing for and running the annual Club Development Conference (CDC) in November. Preparing for the CDC is a big task. We do our best to make sure the topics presented and discussed are meaningful and relevant. Alison is at the heart of this effort. We had another successful conference attended by 150 delegates from 47 clubs. This provided the opportunity to share experiences and ideas on how to do things better. Alison also continues to run the popular on-line Monday evening sessions. These provide clubs with a regular forum to share ideas and discuss problems. Both the Conference and the Monday sessions would not work without the support from the BGA Office team.

The final thanks must go to all the other people who help by providing advice to the Committee. We have a panel of experts and draw upon their professional qualifications and experience to provide good value advice.

Dave Latimer - Chair

Instructing & Examining Committee Report

The Instructing and Examining Committee extends its thanks to Patrick Naegeli for taking interim leadership of the committee prior to Rose Johnson taking over the new chair. Rose is an experienced instructor and former CFI at Midland Gliding Club.

This year we have explored our data in relation to instructor numbers and demographics. The challenge with regards to retirement from the sport as the instructor population ages has become more clearly understood. Initiatives to encourage participation in gliding as an instructor, including direct contact with all club CFIs to establish their situation and needs has ensured all club requirements in relation to instructor training were able to be met in 2023. This included agile assistance to a club that had originally intended to deliver Part 1 training internally during the spring but realised the commitment of assets and local Flight Instructor Coach (FIC) availability would prove to be a barrier. The BGA FIC team were able to step in and deliver the training allowing all candidates to complete Part 1 and attend a BGA led Part 2 instructor course in the late summer.

Being able to run their own courses via their own FICs has been welcomed by clubs. However, the challenge of delivery within the club environment is not without competing demands. The output at the end of the year was generally below the original aspirations of CFIs who intended to achieve instructor training in this way. The BGA delivered output was more aligned with aspiration of the CFI's who had requested places.

Notable achievements this year include the revision and simplification of the Basic Instructor syllabus. Feedback from clubs is that the Basic Instructor qualification is extremely useful and that they feel strongly that they would like it to remain.

The BGA FIC Team welcomed the appointment of Kate Byrne as Senior Regional Examiner (SRE) Scotland and Lyn Ferguson-Dalling as a Regional Examiner (RE), who both led a Part 1 BGA Instructor course aimed at women as a Women and Inclusivity in Gliding initiative. On completion of the Part 1 course, three of the four candidates qualified as Basic Instructors (one was previously qualified). This will allow them to build on their Part 1 training by delivering introductory flights prior to completing part 2. Club's instructor requirements for 2024 have been sought, and the BGA delivered Instructor course draft timetable for 2024 is now being finalised with host venues.

The transition to Sailplane Flight Crew Licensing (SFCL) in September 2025 continues with development of simple associated processes, alignment of the SPL training syllabus, and further development of training material. Allied to this is an increased priority to update the instructor manual. Timely progress is now being made with edition 5.

Andrew Watson provides key support by developing and maintaining the SFCL compliant BGA Bronze examination content and secure digital delivery system. After a recent CAA review of the content and system, the CAA are recommending ongoing use of the BGA theoretical knowledge testing system as we move into SFCL in late 2025. The Committee thanks Andrew for his exceptional support.

Motor gliding specialised guidance has now been absorbed by the wider Committee. Moving forwards there are plans to review how the aerobatic syllabus integrates with the pilot training syllabus.

The Instructor and Examiner Committee consists largely of SREs, all of whom are experienced instructors who provide advice to REs and CFIs. During the year John Garrett and Paul Whitehead have stepped down as SREs. The Committee thanks them for their incredible support over so many years. The Committee welcomes Richard Crockett as SRE for the Thames Valley region.

Rose Johnson – Chair

Stu Naylor – Training Standards Manager

Safety Committee Report

The Safety Committee continues to analyse accidents, produce, and disseminate safety advice and training material, and support the Instructing and Examining Committee's development of the training syllabus.

Analysis. Our accident database and report archive, which contains almost all accident and incident reports from the last 50 years, continues to provide a rich evidence base for safety analysis and development, supported by a positive, no-blame reporting culture that is actively promoted by our network of dedicated Club Safety Officers (CSOs). Three Club Safety Officer seminars were held last year, at Cambridge GC, Bath, Wilts & North Dorset GC and Derby & Lancs GC, and more are planned for 2024. We continue to provide support to AAIB accident investigations and engage regularly with colleagues from other countries through the European Gliding Union Safety Working Group.

Communication. CFIs and instructors continue to remain a key line of communication as well as an invaluable source of practical advice and considered wisdom. In addition, the BGA provides direct communications to pilots. We continue to work closely with other Sub-Committees to engage, learn and inform about safety aspects and key messages, and develop the advice collected in Managing Flying Risk – a live document that has further evolved during 2023.

The topical 'Straighten Up & Fly Right' articles for S&G seem to be well received, and have included advice about aerotow eventualities, winch launches, and the plethora of aspects of gliding that could have changed since you first trained.

Accidents. We were disappointed to record 4 fatalities this year. The general pattern of accidents seems to have changed little over recent years. Details will be published in the 2023 Accident Review.

Thanks. We were devastated last year to lose our friend and colleague Hugh Browning, whose contributions to gliding safety were immeasurable. Over many years, Hugh performed Herculean tasks of research and analysis which, together with his great wisdom and revolutionary insights, have saved many lives and injuries. We strive to maintain a fraction of his effort and effectiveness.

I would again like to thank CSOs and regional teams for relentlessly promoting safety at club level; and numerous individual pilots and instructors for personally adopting and promoting a positive safety culture, diligent reporting, and safety-related suggestions. I would also like to thank the members of the Safety Committee, BGA accident investigators and the Instructing and Examining Committee for continued help and wisdom. Nick Bowers provides splendid support of our database and its analysis, and Edward Lockhart writes careful and readable accident/incident summaries for S&G.

Safe flying in 2024!

Tim Freegarde - Chair

Technical Committee Report

At this time when the UK is considering all aspects of regulation, considerable liaison has taken place to re-appraise our regulators, at all levels of DfT and CAA, of our fitness and competence to manage our own airworthiness affairs. In this we must thank the significant efforts made in the overall GA arena by Pete Stratten, our CEO. These interventions continue to be vital when such a review is being carried out by staff unfamiliar with our established practices. We have clarified that the basic airframe certification processes remain appropriate. Indeed, the BGA has been encouraged by the CAA's preparedness to delegate responsibility and autonomy whenever it is appropriate.

Part-66L engineer licencing for new BGA inspectors remains the major issue of concern in the immediate future. Following major inputs by the BGA to both CAA and Government departments, we have established the involvement of the BGA in defining the content of Part-66L examinations and recent developments have seen the CTO involved in direct conversations within the related recently formed CAA working group. At the practical level, we continue to operate with a static population of BGA maintenance and airworthiness engineers and a tight, fixed deadline for substantiating criteria and a qualification process for new engineers. Note also that unlicensed BGA inspector accreditation remains extant, including to support release to service of non-Part 21 types, now mostly vintage and homebuilt airframes.

We remain concerned as to the geographic and age distribution of the BGA's inspector network. Now under a national administration, we are better placed to examine and re-justify our approach to maintenance particularly given the success of our pilot/owner maintenance education initiative. This will of course remain heavily dependent to the cooperation and prioritisation given to sport aviation by the CAA.

In conjunction with the safety committee, this committee continues to review all accident and incident data to identify technical and airworthiness issues. Those identified are mailed regularly to inspectors and owners via the technical news sheet (TNS), whose content has been greatly enhanced by the CTO's efforts.

During 2023 our CTO Gordon MacDonald ran some 13 full day seminars for inspectors, club technical officers and pilot/owner maintainers. In addition, Ian Gallagher has provided 8 seminars of Human Factors Considerations in Maintenance. We are most grateful to Ian for his continuing support in this

Our Regional Technical Officers (RTO's) continue to provide valued technical advice at the membership level over wide aspects of the technical side of gliding. The BGA continues its programme of Quality Audits largely on behalf of CAA, led by Keith Morgan and Andy Brind. We thank all these for their assistance including those at the BGA office who have maintained a timely and compliant airworthiness process.

Howard Torode - Chair

Junior Gliding Report

2023 was a busy year for UK Junior Gliding. The Winter Series continued to go from strength-to-strength, with 135 attendees at Denbigh in February, 90 at Dunstable in April, and 92 at Portmoak in October.

The first event of the year was the second round of the 2022-2023 Winter Series at Denbigh in early February. We managed 117 hours of flight time in three days, with 136 launches into wave and weak thermals, as well as lots of aerobatics!

Also in February, Jono Bradford, Anne Soltow, Merlin Ohta, Toby Freeland and I presented at the BGA Conference on Junior Gliding, highlighting what UK Junior Gliding has done for each of us, including experiencing flying at new sites in new glider types through the Winter Series, aerobatics, the Junior Nationals Two-Seater Training and the Junior British Team.

In April, the weather for the Dunstable Winter Series was challenging. We had planned a weekend of cross country flying, but heavy rain meant we only achieved cross-country tasks on the Sunday. However, at this event, there were 4 CFIs and 3 DCFIs, with an average age of 30, with all of us having benefitted from Junior Gliding in some way in the past! These were:

- Ryan Berry – CFI of London Gliding Club
- Stefan Astley – DCFI of London Gliding Club
- Lucy Wootton – CFI of Edgehill Gliding Centre
- Ross Morriss – CFI of Peterborough & Spalding Gliding Club
- Jordan Bridge – DCFI of Lasham Gliding Society
- Chris Gill – CFI of Denbigh Gliding
- Alex O’Keefe – DCFI of Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club

During the summer, the British Gliding Team Junior Development Squad headed to Issoudun for a Development Week and 46e International Issoudun competition. Henry Inigo-Jones finished in second place in the Multiclass, while Ollie Ramsay came second in the Club Class and George White third.

At the end of July, the Junior British Team competed in the 6th FAI European Gliding Championship at Arnborg in Denmark. Toby Freeland came second in the Club Class, while Freddie Turner finished 7th in the Standard Class.

Back on home soil, the Junior Nationals was extremely well run at Cambridge Gliding Centre by Competition Director and former Junior World Champion, Finn Sleight and his competition team. There were a record eight days of competition flying, resulting in a lot of tired, but happy Junior pilots! Henry Inigo-Jones became Junior Champion, closely followed by Toby Freeland and Ben Edkins in second and third place respectively.

In October, the Portmoak Winter Series kicked off the twelfth round of these events in ‘winter’

2023-24. This Winter Series event was a particularly special one because of some impressive achievements. The weather on adjacent weekends to the event was unflyable due to heavy rain, but we were incredibly fortunate to have ridge and wave on all three days, with many Junior pilots getting their first experience of wave flying. We accomplished over 130 soaring flights and a total of 165 hours flown in 3 days! Martyn Cobham achieved his Diamond Height and Seb Van Der Stichele his Gold Height.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals, syndicates and clubs who help to run Junior Gliding events, bring their gliders and instruct – without you, Junior Gliding would not work!

Lucy Wootton

UK Junior Gliding Development Team

British Gliding Team Report

The 12th FAI Women's World Championships were held in Garray, Spain from 2nd to 14th July. It was a late change of venue to a smaller and constricted site which led to some interesting discussions with the organisers and stewards. At over 3,000 ft AMSL, it took quite some time for the weather conditions to be right for launch leading to late starts and late finishes resulting in long days! No medals at this competition for the team but we did end up in 4th overall in the team competition and there were a smattering of podium finishes for pilots in Club and Standard classes.

The 6th FAI Junior European Championships were held in Arnborg, Denmark from 29th July to 14th August in wet and windy weather conditions. At one stage it looked like it wouldn't be a valid competition, but they did manage somehow to have 4 days. Watching the task setting from afar, there were some interesting tasks; for example, a racing task of 285km with 8 turn points. Well done to Toby Freeland who came away with a Silver medal, only one point short of Gold! A team Bronze medal was a great result too.

The 27th European Championships took place from July 26th to 11th August in Leszno, Poland. The weather was 'intermittent' but thankfully, the weather forecaster (Elmer from Lithuania) called it right most of the time to make best use of the available conditions. The 20m boys got off to a flying start (excuse the pun) on day one with a first and second podium place. They kept this good momentum for the remainder of the competition with Pete Harvey and Chris Dawes finishing with a Silver medal only two points away from a Gold, with Steve Jones and Gary Coppin winning Bronze.

The final competition of the year was the 37th FAI World Championship from 3rd to 15th December in Narromine, Australia. As you would expect for a competition at this level, it was a hard fought and keenly contested competition in all classes in some fabulous weather conditions. There were some incredibly varied conditions during the 10 flying days of competition from 43C blue days, to shear wave, fast cumulus days, convergences, showers, storms, smoke, and gust fronts. It made for some exciting and rapid flying at the end of which Tom Arscott emerged victorious as Standard Class World Champion. We were oh so close (less than one point) for a team Bronze.

Overall, 2023 was a successful season for the British Gliding Team with a total of five medals including a World Champion.

Werner Stroud – Team Manager

2023 in numbers

35

instructor and
inspector seminars

1

World Champion

55

new basic
instructors

368

total number of
inspectors

1,164

new badges,
certificates, and
licences

845

total number of
assistant and full
instructors

434

total number of
BIs and IFPs

2,100

aircraft supported

123

new qualified pilots

27

new assistant instructors