



SCOTTISH
GLIDING CENTRE

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THE GLIDERS

newsletter

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Looking back on the Scottish Cross Country Development Week

Well, the first thing we could say is that we were lucky with the weather, it was shite before and after it, jammy wot?

Prior to the SCCDW the ICL got one x/country day in with the SGU winning Round 1. Well done to all.

Entrants from all parts of the country started arriving on Sunday and we held our introductory, operational and safety briefings followed by dinner provided by HMB catering.

On Monday I got into what became my usual routine of up at 05:30, prepare the notams, weather and tasks briefings, meet up with Reiner the Dynamo at 06:30 and discuss the day. He would then lay out the grid and do all the operational preparation. I must say the Reiner worked tirelessly and without him the week would not have been the success that it was. Anyway, pre briefing duties would be topped off by what became my usual bacon and linked sausage roll provided by Holly & Mitch; yummy.... don't get this at home!

It was not a x/country day which was a good thing as it allowed everyone to settle in. After briefing, the 40+ pilots split into their respective groups to get to know each other and start the initial introductory mentoring. The groups were: the CCE mentored by Stewart Reid & Gerry Marshall, the Silvers by John Galloway & Tony Brown, and the Gold + by John Williams and Kate Byrne. The Diamonds didn't need any help and could look after themselves.

In the afternoon G. Dale gave introductory talks on wave and convergences. The day finished off with a barbie and drinking of beer.

Tuesday was a good soaring day. The SuperCub from down South finally arrived (that's another story) and we all gridded before briefing. 300k Gold & Silver distance tasks were suggested. I've never before seen 28+ gliders gridded at Portmoak and



it was a truly inspiring site. In total we had 38 gliders at Portmoak registered to fly the week and due to good organisation and pilot discipline it all worked pretty well. The day itself was really interesting and showed the subtlety and variety of Scottish soaring conditions. Basically, it was a wave affected thermal day where, towards the end, the wave predominated. Stewart Reid got his Gold distance, 1 of 4 flights over 300k and altitudes of over 9000' were achieved. Well done to Stewart!

The remaining three days were a bit more variable, still soarable but with showers.

Thursdays most notable flight was Matt Roberts 103km O/R to just short of Aberfoyle in his beautiful SHK. His only comment, "Grazed both elbows". A hard fought and challenging flight done in a style that only Matt can do. I on the other hand, went home in the evening to some nice fruit cordials and civilization.



Friday the weather pepped up a bit but still with showers. Tasks were suggested and over 200k distances were flown. Man of the match was Mark Adams who achieved his Silver distance with an O/R to the Lake of Montieith and back. A really punchy effort, I reckon. Really well done Mark!

The day finished with a barbie and back to the beers.

Saturday was to be the final soaring day as it was predicted to be non-soarable on Sunday.

The day finished with another barbie and drinking even more beer.

Wednesday was a pure thermal day with a possibility of a good sea breeze front, (it turned out to be not that good a front). However, it was, in parts, a cracking day, particularly over the Glen Clova and Loch Muick area. To the SE it was more challenging. Diamond goal and Silver distance tasks were suggested and resulted in 6 flights of over 300k. Stephen Kenyon Roberts (Aboyne) got his Diamond Goal distance, Dougie Wilson got his Gold distance and Howard Manning got his Silver distance landing out near Forfar. Well done all and a great day out.

Holly and Mitch (HMB) provided a nice evening meal and I switched to white wine.

The days plan was flying and then a couple of short talks by G before dinner.

The best effort of the day was Dougie Wilson flight of 162km to Balmaha but he had to start his engine half way along the second leg.



We all met up at 17:00 and we had two good discussions on convergences and wave cross country techniques. The evening concluded with an excellent Chicken Kiev and a refreshing Pinot Gris.

So, what did I think of it?

Well, it was great that the first and last day were non flying days. It allowed people to settle in and pack up in a nice leisurely fashion. I reckon the SCCDW was, all in all, a success. We got two Silvers, two Gold distances and a Diamond Goal distance. We had 38 gliders involved with no incidents. The most important thing is that we all learnt something. I think that it was well run and we all acted in a professional and disciplined manner. People to thank are Reiner, G' for his talks and input, Mark Adams for the catering and Colin Hamilton who

worked in the background with his spreadsheets. Borders GC also put a significant effort towards the week as did Aboyne with their tug and pilots.

My personal highlights... watching the grid operate, Adrian Docherty's barbie catching fire (good job the Gazebo was not up) and working with Reiner.

We plan to hold it in 2026 at the same Bat time and the same Bat place. Stewart Reid will be head honcho as I'm retiring... phew!

Till then...

Sant Cervantes

Photos courtesy Mason, Arthur and David

Silver Distance at SCCDW

When you try gliding for a week at sixteen and then leave it for almost five decades, it's a challenge to learn, and even a first solo feels like an achievement. Soon you are caught up in a se-

quence of manageable achievements, starting with bronze: the theory exam — all those radio frequencies, forgotten immediately; and the test flight — who else would be daft

enough to attempt a landing via the gap in the trees? Cross-country endorsement: field selection, easy enough but see below; and navigation — you follow the river Tay confidently, only to find the mountains closing in — the instructor says nothing — you realise your mistake eventually, turn round, get back to Portmoak and pass by the skin of your teeth!

Now for silver! The height is easy enough — but don't think that a 1050 m height gain is more than the 1000 m requirement, because if your FLARM is uncalibrated you need 1100 m. The duration is merely boring, provided you've mastered the art of personal fluid balance in the cockpit. No, the next rite of passage is going OUT OF RANGE. You set off for Pitlochry, get low over Dunkeld, notice the unlandable terrain, turn back in a cowardly manner — I mean, you exhibit fine airmanship — pick a field, stay close to it awaiting your fate, and — miracles do happen — you soar to 3000 feet. You don't have the nerve to set off again. At least you get back, who needs fields?

Next you foolishly attend the Scottish Cross Country Development Week, where you know Sant will tell you to 'just e**ing do it'. You program PCS-DRU-PCS, easy enough apart from Perth, Dundee and plummeting skydivers between them. Just as the slack is taken up, your instruments report a



fault in the batteries that you carefully charged overnight. You remember to concentrate on the tow, get into a thermal, and start to press buttons

and you have the presence of mind to go a bit further to make sure you're 50 km from the release point — see below.



Then you make your first mistake. It looks more direct to go home via the southern side of the Sidlaws, and it would be so dull to go back the same way, just because it worked on the way out? It seems the Tay estuary isn't a great place for thermals, something to do with the difficulty of warming up water? You lose height steadily, you see some nice fields, you are tired, it might be a relief to land rather than struggle onwards in 1 knot climbs. You make your second mistake: those brown fields certainly don't contain crops of unknowable height, so that's safe isn't it? You remember to do a good circuit, and manage to approach uphill, into wind and parallel to the furrows. What could possibly go wrong?

while keeping an excellent lookout. Everything off and on again; you have no idea whether the task declaration will still be in the FLARM. You press 'upload' on the Oudie to make sure, and — several times in a row — see a message indicating failure of the declaration. One last try before returning to start again, and it works!

Now your nerves are jangling, and you haven't even started. Will the batteries run out, leaving you with a paper map and view of unfamiliar terrain, when it's raining bodies with unopened parachutes? Is the SD card recording your route, what if it's all in vain? You thermal masterfully to 3000 feet, and decide to press on; you shoot across the countryside towards the next thermal, at an entirely judgemental speed which corresponds to a scary vario reading. You climb like a diamond pilot to 4000 feet — what could possibly go wrong — and thread your way through the airspace. The instruments screech warnings, but you can see it's just a feather and you're pretty sure this is uncontrolled. 100 knots for a while to make the instruments shut up.

There are Sidlaw Hills but you go round the north side of them, plenty of height, well over half way and you've never been below 2500 feet. You zoom in on the moving map to get through the quadrant of the turn point — never mind the fact that you forgot to go back to the Portmoak circle and therefore haven't even started the task! The instruments say you are 53 km from Portmoak,

You approach fast and round out early, to deal with the slope. It's a fully held off landing — just as well those instructors told me off recently for failing to get the stick all the way back — and the touchdown is alright. What could possibly ... suddenly the aircraft decelerates and tips onto its nose. Oh no, I've collapsed the gear (again). I clamber out, quivering, and see that the wheel is in the correct place but buried up to its axle in clods of ploughed field. Oh well, the first task is to avoid killing the pilot. The glider isn't broken, just badly scratched (sorry guys). Long aftermath involving several locals and a tractor, luckily there's a grass verge at the edge of the field wide enough for a derig. That's quite enough gliding for one day!

The next day I discover that the instruments did indeed record an IGC file despite the battery troubles, and after a considerable amount of muttering by the observing officer about release points, a far point is chosen that is higher than the release and gives a flight distance of 50.4 km. Why waste effort flying around the countryside to an unnecessary extent — after all, you're not doing this for fun!

Howard Manning

Howard was just granted his silver distance by the BGA. However, they pointed out that it was even more marginal with a distance of 50.045 km. That's less than half the length of the centre strip!