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Inter Club League 2021

The Scottish Gliding Union has won the Scottish Inter club league for the second year running, now beating off tough competition from the other clubs. Normally there are 2 legs to the competition each year but this year there was only one leg held at Aboyne.

It is held over a weekend so we take the view that if we get a cross country task it's a bonus but it's a great way to travel to other clubs in Scotland, catch up with friends, have a few drinks and hopefully a BBQ.

As a team we started the preparation weeks in advance with a zoom meeting to discuss rules, equipment, hints and tips. This helped pilots who had never done a competition before and also a good re-cap for those more experienced. We have a wealth of experience in our team and club so its a great way to tap into it.

We entered two teams. Each being made up of a novice pilot, intermediate

and pundit. We also took up three dual gliders for coaching.

We had flyable but poor weather on Saturday so no task but for those not familiar with flying at Aboyne this was a nice day for them to fly and orientate themselves to the club.

Sunday had potential for thermal later in the day so we had a long wait in pleasant warm weather and eventually we had a small task down the Dee valley then North before a return back to Aboyne.

Alastair Mutch won the pundit task with Sant coming 4th but results were close in the pundits. Kate Byrne won the intermediate task and was the only intermediate to complete the task. Mitch Skene won the novice.

Hopefully Portmoak will be hosting one out of the two legs next year and we will retain the cup for the third year.

Alex Maitland

Hus Bos Midland Regionals



We are all competitive, aren't we? Whether it's a fundamental force of human survival or just that slightly smug feeling of flying just a few minutes longer or a hundred feet higher than our fellow members, we are competitive. So that's probably why 10 pilots and 6 gliders from Portmoak ended up at Hus Bos for the Midland Regionals in mid-July alongside the Club Class Nationals competition....

- Adrian in Duo Discus XLT XX with Thomas crewing
- Brian Scougall and Colin Macalpine in Duo Discus 977 (Fiona flew as well)
- Alex Maitland in Vega 639
- Dougie Wilson in Ventus 2cT 782
- Alastair Mutch in Discus 2cT 797
- Phil Dolan in Ventus 2cxT KS

Jono Bradford was also there to crew for one of the Club Class pilots but scored four backseat rides with Adrian and Brian (thanks guys!)

Like all Regional and National competitions it ran from Saturday through to the Sunday week with approx. 30 gliders in each competition. Lots of gliders, lots. All rather impressive when you see them gridded-up ready for the off.



A typical grid

Launching was via seven tow planes (four Chipmunks, a Robin, a Pawnee and a Wilga which is the oddest looking plane!) and was accomplished within 45 minutes for each competition; with "held" starts and stream launching this meant that there was close to 50 gliders in the air around the airfield – if you ever think your look-out is fine, just try the pre-start to a competition day to get a measure of what can be required!

Rather than go through the details, the first 6 days were great with lots of hot sunshine; sure some days were blue which made the pre-starts and tasks more "exciting" than they already were but the task setting was quite good with racing tasks between 200 – 300 km. They even had us starting one task at 1545hrs – quite late

but most got around. By day 7 (Friday) the weather started to go downhill and there was no further contest flying but 6 contest days out of 9 isn't bad for the UK. The tasks were distance handicapped tasks where the size of the turn sector varied with the handicap factor of the glider – in theory this meant that if all gliders started at the same time they would all finish at the same time if flown equally well – quite a good system as it meant the gliders tended to stay together around the task which was fun. One drawback though was that it meant the airfield was very busy when gliders were returning; Hus Bos is quite small, it's a bit narrower and about 50% longer than the centre field at Portmoak, so imagine that with 20-30 gliders landing in it!

The pilots who fly down South regularly are very good – the current Open Class World Champion (Russell Cheetham) was flying and, no surprise, won the Regionals. The Club Class National pilots were equally impressive in some "ordinary" machines and regularly out-flew us in our "superships". I guess we could say that the Portmoak contingent was "steady" and did ok up against the local pilots.

Main take-aways for me from the competition:

- Doing well is about avoiding mistakes and penalties (which I should do) rather than excellent flying (which I can't do). Do the basic things right.
- If you are struggling or think you are doing badly, don't worry, everyone else is.
- Trust yourself, your instruments and your glider – they all go better than you think.
- You do not need to be a top pilot to fly a comp and enjoy it. In many ways you are competing against yourself (hey, can't lose!) and the aim is to fly better, further, harder than you did the previous day.
- Always remember it's meant to be fun...

You should try a competition. While they can be somewhat daunting there are actually good fun. Everyone is super helpful and friendly despite it

being a competition and you really get to test your own and your glider's limits and build your flying skills and judgement – it's always surprising (to me anyway) how much more you can achieve and how well a modern glider flies when pushed.

See you on the grid!

Phil Dolan



Final Glide

Portmoak's First Competition

The SGU spent much of 1957 and early 1958 converting a few of the fields at Portmoak Farm into a gliding site, a mammoth task for what was, in these days, still a small club. The work, virtually all carried out by the members, included removing fences and erecting new ones, bridging the ditch at the gate, constructing an access road, piping and infilling another ditch half way down the strip, and, not least, dismantling the blister hangar at its former location at Renfrew, transporting it to Portmoak, and re-erecting it. After all that, it is remarkable that the club volunteered to host a competition in the summer of 1958!

Apparently, the BGA had insufficient resources to run a National Championship that year, in addition to supporting a team to compete in the World Championships in Poland, so they proposed that several clubs run small competitions of their own. These "National Gliding Weeks", as they were known, became the forerunners of the regional competitions we have nowadays.

The SGU was one of the three applicants selected, probably because theirs was a brand new and interesting site. The club was probably hoping that the event would bring some publicity, and consequently some new members. Portmoak proved interesting enough to attract

several entrants from the far south, including Philip Wills [World Champion in 1952], and Geoffrey Stevenson [first pilot to soar across the English Channel]. Each flew the latest "hot ship" from Slingsby's - the Skylark 3.

The weather was decidedly mixed, with three days being total washouts and thundery downpours on another. Portmoak became renowned for its "paddy fields" for a time, but remarkably, there were five contest days. By climbing in cloud, several pilots managed to cross the Forth, landing near Kelso and Berwick on Tweed. These landings would each have entailed a pig of a retrieve, in the days before motorways and the Forth Road Bridge. The final Sunday was the best day, with all seven entries able to get away. Wills reached Fraserburgh, with two others not far behind.

Stevenson was the winner for the week, with the team of Thorburn and Adamson, sharing a club Olympia 2b, being the highest placed local entry, in fourth position overall. And there was one other "significant event" - your scribe took to the air for the very first time, at the age of fourteen, for a three-minute circuit in the canopied T21b!

Bruce Marshall

Other Aviators at Portmoak

Apparently Portmoak is the second busiest airfield in Scotland, after Prestwick. Unlike Prestwick we only fly in daylight, but did you know that Portmoak is home to another group of skilled aviators, for whom IFR flight is the norm?

My day job is as a consultant ecologist, special-

ising in working with bats and several years ago I and a group of students spent some time studying the bats who make the airfield their home. We erected bat boxes around the workshop and caravan site to encourage bats to roost, set up passive acoustic monitors to record their calls and spent several nights using a large 'harp trap' to catch bats in flight (and release them

afterwards). The outcome of this is that we now know that five bat species hunt around the airfield for the insect prey at night, one of them rare. They use ultrasonic echolocation to navigate and find their prey in the dark,

The UK's two commonest bat species are very similar (it was only in the 1990s that they were realised to be separate species) - the Common



A Soprano pipistrelle, expressing strong opinions!

and Soprano Pipistrelle both hunt around the trees at the edges of the airfield and at the workshops. Think of these as the Schleicher K21s of the bat world – widespread generalists with dependable, middle of the road flight characteristics. Like the K21, if anything is flying it's probably one of them. Unlike the K21 they do us the service of hoovering up 2-3,000 midges each per night.

The rare species at Portmoak is related to them. The Nathusius' pipistrelle is usually found near large water bodies and Loch Leven is home to a colony of them, one or two of whom are often to be found hunting above the track beside the caravan park. They often migrate over very long distances to hibernate, so possibly they equate to a Discus Turbo in the hands of one of our cross-

country pundits.

The Brown Long-eared Bat is also present at Portmoak, hunting amongst the workshop trees and is a bat with very different flight characteristics. As well as ridiculously large ears (so it can listen for insects) it is probably the K-8 of the bat world. It has broad wings and a large tail surface, enabling it to fly very slowly and turn on a sixpence. This enables it to manoeuvre close to vegetation and pluck off insects to eat.



A Daubenton's Bat, caught at Portmoak

A highly specialised species present at Portmoak is the Daubenton's bat. These are water specialists, hunting low over the Leven Cut for aquatic insects and scooping them from the water's surface with their feet. I was struggling for a glider comparison, until I recalled that a Slingsby Falcon was fitted with floats during World War II and launched from Windermere by boat-tow. I understand it's now on show at the Windermere Steamboat Museum.

David Dodds

Winning entries for the caption competition



I am telling you. In 30 years this hat will still be fashionable.

Have you found the instructions to open the canopy?

Congratulations to Bill Evans and Christian Maclean, who have each won a free winch launch for their entries

