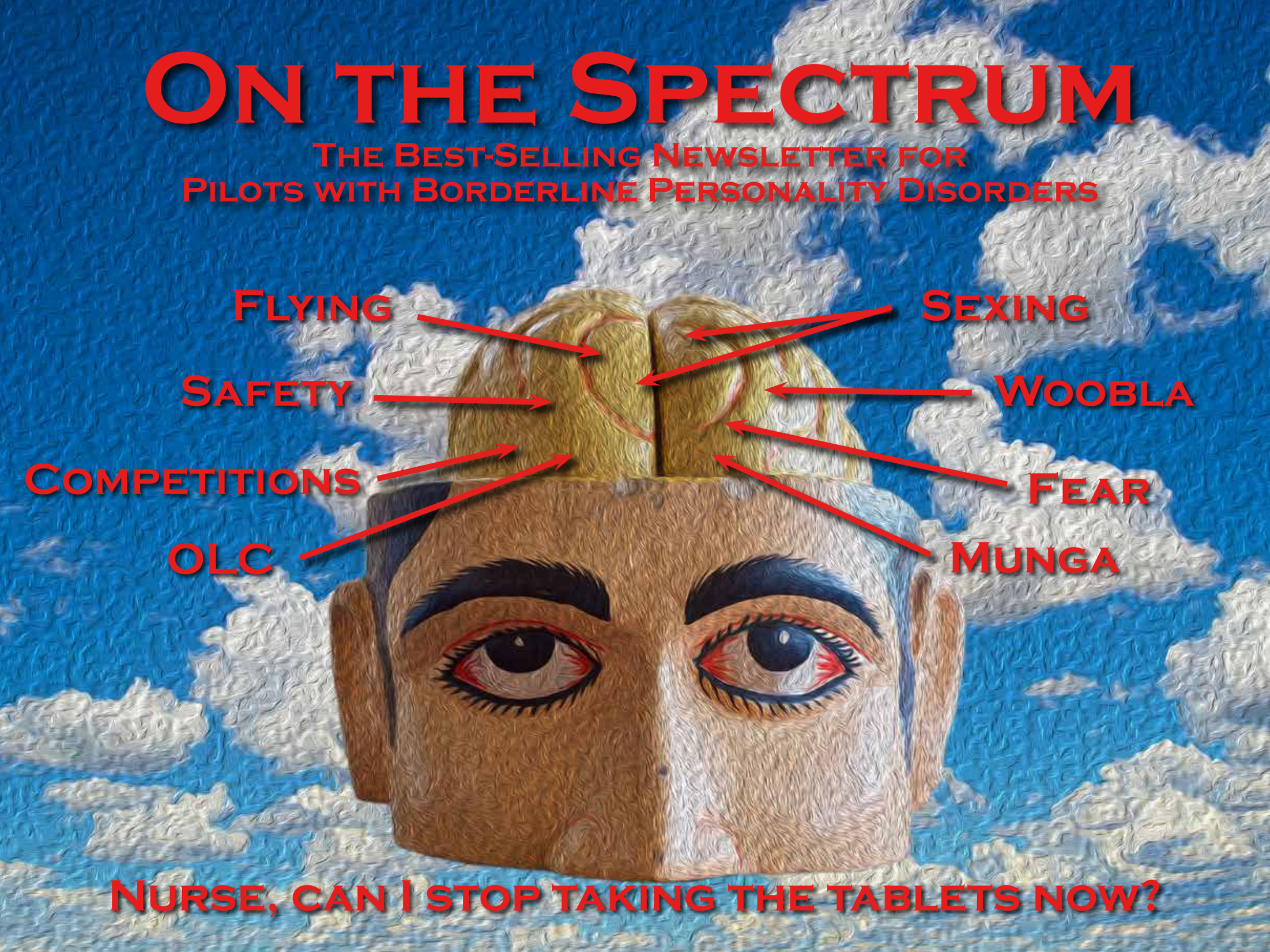
On the Spectrum

The Best-Selling Newsletter for Pilots with Borderline Personality Disorders



Nurse, can I stop taking the tablets now?

Keep Soaring is late as usual. We're already well into the start of a new season with all the signs showing it's going to be a boomer with pilots, mainly Allan Barnes, flying some great distances.

In spite of the green surroundings up at Keepit last time I was up there, those ever-cooperative irrigators have lowered the level of the dam to give more outlanding opportunities than I have seen for years.

This is the first issue of On the Spectrum and probably the first official newsletter for Glider Pilots with Borderline Personality Disorders.

Hopefully the events of tonight's AGM will not require a second issue.

There were several inspirations for this topic. One was watching a fellow pilot strap his glider down to the ground with doubled up stakes and 2 inch webbing on a perfectly fine afternoon. Another was reading the book "The Psychopath Test" and later, watching my wife cheat as she took an online test which is the mark of a real psychopath.

And finally, there were the events of earlier this year which shook people's confidence in the piloting trade to the point where drone airliners increasingly seem like a good idea to the general public.

I mentioned to a previous editor of this newsletter than I was thinking about this topic as a newsletter theme… you do have to have a theme you know… and the following day, he told me that he could not think of a pilot *without* a personality disorder of one sort or another, excluding himself and me.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5) is everyman's big book about barking mad behaviour, the maintenance manual for your head.

It's the book which invented and then made popular such things as obsessive compulsive disorder, autism and Aspergers which opened the door for drug companies to invent pills to fix these disorders.

The enlarged and expanded 5th volume covers almost everything you need for self-diagnosis and for working through problems with family and friends… and you can download the entire thing free.

You will find that you are on the spectrum of most disorders, but probably you will only have a mild form compared with most of the other pilots you know.

I began suspecting my wife was well on the spectrum some time ago. There were many clues. Shortly before crossing the Atlantic on a small boat, I got the video of the film 'All is Lost'. The story involves a single handed sailor who ends up losing his boat and swimming.

I thought it would put her in touch with her true feelings. Her reaction was… well… none. Zero. Nada. Of course she may just have been having her ritual pre-sleep in front of the TV again.

A early indicator of her problems was when we were having an argument in the car. She had gone silent for some time and I asked what she was thinking of. Her reply shocked and outraged me.

She said "I was thinking of ways of killing you and getting away with it." This was actually my idea and she had stolen it! I was mulling around this topic as the basis for a film script or something and she'd asked the same 'penny for your thoughts' question of me.

I might not have answered so truthfully if I had known she'd not only steal my idea but think about using it!

It was on that basis I got her to take the psychopath test online. There are dozens of sites where you can take this test and you might want to try the same thing on your partner. My wife actually failed the test and now claims that's proof she's not a psychopath.

In fact she somehow cheated as she does when beating me at chess, cunningly manipulating the answers to give the best results. So the tests are not foolproof, not for a real psychopath.

One of the more popular borderline personality disorders shown by glider pilots is obsessive compulsive disorder. If you don't know what that is, do an online test and no doubt you'll discover you have it… unless you cheat like the Leader of the Opposition in our house. OCD is very popular indeed with pilots of all types so there's an excellent chance you're on this spectrum.

In fact there are strong links between OCD and self preservation and when the risk level is higher than normal as with gliding, then any OCD tendencies show themselves.

There's a fine line between doing a good preflight check and obsessive compulsive behaviour, especially if you are interrupted and as the manual says (the GFA manual not the head-shrink one) you should start again from the beginning.

If you find yourself checking things more than once or doing more than one walk-around, then OCD is your man.

There are sub-borderline versions of OCD which are even more popular. One, according to my daughter, is OCP. This, she claims, is when you have an obsessive compulsive personality… you have OCD but you have it under control enough to appear normal. Not that this daughter appears normal. And the other one readily admits to OCD.

We now have an active Safety Management System (SMS) at Keepit and the right man to keep it, the man in the Llama beanie, our Trevor West. Safety does not appear in DSM-5 though perhaps it ought to… or the lack of or disregard of safety.

More of this below!

By the way, instead of complaining about Keep Soaring, you could stage a putsch… a palace coup… depose the despots… kick in the rotten door… grab your typewriter and take over!

The Editor

Photos by Dave Holbrook and Geraldine Clark

Support your local miller!

The community of LKSC bakers (and there are a few of them!) are fortunate to have one of Australia's best flour mills right on their doorstep.

Demeter Farm Mill flour comes from the Wholegrain Milling Company at 17-21 Borthistle Road Gunnedah NSW 2380.

A good range of organic bakers flour as well as grains and muesli can be bought from the mill in 1, 5 and 10 kg bags.

Martian Place Outlanding

We had a really great, but long day in Martin Place on 9th of October. We set up the Duo Discus and display at 5:30am and the show ran till 7pm. We were pretty much flat out talking to interested people all day.

Clubs represented were Lake Keepit, Southern Cross and Central Coast. We will have given out over 500 LKSC brochures to interested parties, all who were really interested in learning more about our great sport.

Top questions, were:

1) Is it safe,

2) How did you land the glider into Martin Place,

3) How much does the glider cost,

4) How can I have a go.

We offered several promos on the day, reinforced in the give-away brochure. It is important that members keep these promos in the back of their minds, such that if you get a visitor that presents to the club (we did encourage all to make a booking first) that there was a one off promotion available on the day, which can be used through to 30 June 2016.

These promos are:

1) 30% discount on a AEF. NSWGA will reimburse LKSC $30 (being the GFA fee) for any such discount we provide. We need to tally up any of these flights that we provide, so that we can invoice NSWGA for the reimbursement.

Perhaps Val can start a tally sheet on the board in the office. The discount will need to be applied to the flight sheet manually.

All clubs presenting at Martin Place were required to offer this 30% discount.

2) If a AEF pilot (being a new pilot to LKSC) then joins the club for a full annual membership, we will provide the AEF free of charge. We still claim the $30 reimbursement from NSWGA.

3) Any of these pilots (and direct family) have been offered one nights free accommodation at the club, subject to availability.

All of these specials are designed to get the prospective member out of the city and make the effort to spend a weekend at LKSC. We all then need to do our best to ensure that they receive the customary Lake Keepit welcome that we all know.

It may take many months or longer to determine the full extent of the success the event in attracting new members to LKSC, but we should start to get

some flavour from Val and Jenny should bookings start to come through, and hopefully from the Membership Secretary, having to issue a many of new membership cards.

In due course, the Committee will be looking for your support to assist in a membership drive for new local members, by running an open weekend and providing some additional promotional incentives. A date has not yet been set, however this is likely to be in the new year, given we have a bit on our hands at the moment.

Special thanks to the following members who gave up their time today to assist and represent Keepit:

Dave Shorter, Terry Petherbridge, Harry & Wendy Medlicott, Ross Edwards, Nigel Holmes, Bill Keats, Nick Edwards, Michael Shirley, Ian Sawell, David Holmes, Jacques Graells, Ian Downes, Greg Nelson. I was really proud how you all represented the club today!

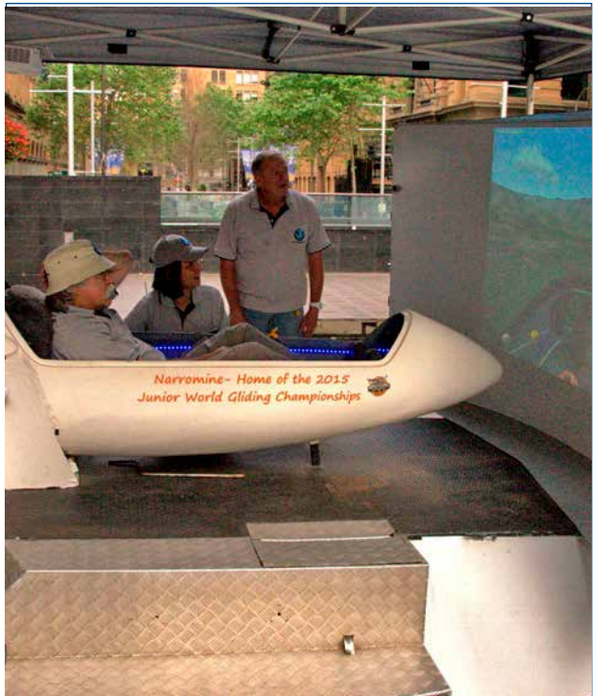
Thanks to Greg Nelson and Ian Downes for driving the Duo Discus back to Tamworth tonight.

I am certain that we will have a direct increase in members, visitors and students off the back off the display today, however it may take 12 months to really be able to gauge its true success.

I note we also look to have obtained a new Tuggie. Southern Cross and Central Coast also had a productive day, however having our glider on display went a long way to Keepit being the premier club on the day.

Best in show and well done to the team!

Tim Carr



Water Water Everywhere!

The long running installation of the water points to the glider tie down area is now complete. Attached are a few photos, including a picture of one of the water points.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of, and thank Chris Carr, Errol Carr, Ian Downes, Grant Nelson, David Bull, Graham Heagney for assisting me in completing this project to upgrade our facilities for visiting pilots ahead of the Nationals and State Comps. Into this project, the club has invested about $8k and hundreds of volunteer man hours.

This underground installation consists of 8 lines installed perpendicular to the airfield, each with 5 water points spaced a 20m intervals, being 40 water points in total. The closest water point to the airfield also has an isolation valve so that each line can be separately isolated if needed.

These lines are about 600mm deep, to try to avoid tie down pegs piecing the lines, however there are some spots where it may be shallower due to rocks, and hence I ask all members to remind visitors not to put down pegs along the lines of the water points.

These water points are suitable for "light traffic" and hence can withstand a car or glider being towed across them, and hence no longer need to be marked with tyres. They are set at ground level so that the slasher can run straight over the top. While they withstand light traffic, please try not to drive directly across them or roll the tractor tyres across them.

Last weekend, grass seed has been planted along the bare earth where the lines are installed, and these will be irrigated with soaker hoses over the coming weeks to do our best to establish some grass cover prior to the November Comps.

If you are at the club, it would be most appreciated if you could spare 5 minutes to move these lines across each of the water point lines to ensure that they are getting well-watered. Each soaker hose has a timer on it, so you can turn it on for an hour or so.

At each water point there is a green plastic lid that needs to be lifted to expose the water point. Special push in tap stands are used that clip into these water points.

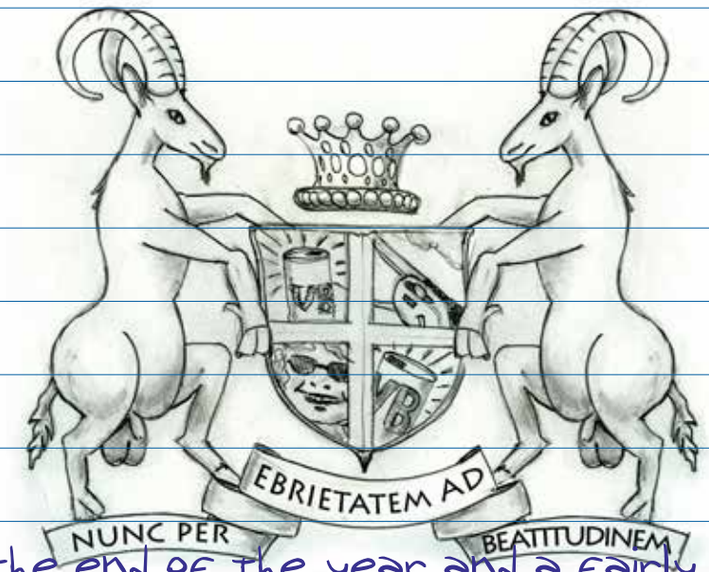
Please try not to run over a water point that has a tap in it, as it is likely to break off the plastic fittings and potentially ruins that water point. Also, please keep an eye out to ensure that all the green plastic covers are replaced when not in use, as if they fill up with dirt, they are a pain to clean out. If a cover is missing please let me know as there are spares available.

The water points are also designed to take a sprinkler head for irrigation purposes, for when we are permitted to irrigate.

All the taps and irrigation stands will be located in the Duo Discuss hangar. There are only a handful of the stands at the moment, as I will be making up the rest when next up at the club.

Tim Carr

Clarkie you bastard, can you fix this up properly this time without the well hung goats? I need it to look 'presidential' and proper for a change'



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Well we're nearly at the end of the year and a fairly grouse one it has been at that. Yes, there have been times when I've felt like taking on a bit more VB than the leader of the opposition might find suitable but that's life eh bro?

(While I'm talking like a Kiwi, lets hope the bastards choke at Twickers as they usually do in the finals of sporting stuff and the right and proper team wins.) Certainly won't do my VB shares any harm'

Anyway, back to biz. It's that time of year when I have to write my ANNUAL ESSAY about the state of the nation.

A heaps and heaps of stuff has been done recently and for once, ~~that bastard~~ the editor has chosen to mention a few like the Martin PLaza and water stuff. Incidentally, have you seen how he's wrecked the website' I was just ~~begining~~ starting to find my way around with a bit of help from ~~my IT consultatants~~ the missus but now I'm completely stuffed'

The club house and kitchen area has ~~undergone significant improvement~~ has been ~~worked over~~ fixed up by Christian Linned and Jason (not a bad sort of bloke for a hang glider pilot) Kath. Call me old fashioned but I kind of liked the spiders and dust of the old place but there you go. ~~Poofteas~~ Progress they call it.

The flight centre has had the same treatment too thanks to Val, Pete, Daniel and Lise on the paint brushes. Typical Poms though... invite them into your place and soon as you turn around, they've changed it all so they feel right at home"

The ~~video games area~~ stimulator is going well too so they tell me. THank goodness we have more than our fair share of ~~nerds~~ techos in gliding. ~~Back in my day we~~

The ~~nerdism~~ expertise involved in the construction is ~~baffling~~ staggering to a bushie like me and I extend our thanks to "the team" for a magnificent efforts (even though I have not got the slightest clue about how to turn the thing on!).

I understand that Grant Nelson is now up and running with Keepit Glider Tech. At least I think thats what he said (in Kiwi) ~~I hope that they dont win at twickers or he'll be playing the uppity coon all year~~ but gliders seem to go in there broke and come out shiny and fixed. Keepit Glider Tech will be the envy of many a lesser club so rub their noses in it if youse get the chance.

The flip side of this is that we had to make some work-shop space so the ~~tight arse bodgers~~ members who want to fix their own gliders have somewhere else to work. Thanks to David Bull for sorting this out and for organising form 2 week and all that to keep our gliders in the air at minimum cost to all of youse.

Otherwise, things are plurry good! Val has kept the students coming through the system and glider hire is good and healthy. We've got lots of members, most of whom pay their subs... I gather the editor chappie got the hard word from Mr. Bowman who threatened him with expulsion and having to re join which as we know, was unlikely to happen under my watch!

I bet we're all glad to see Vic Hatfield is back with some new plumbing, keeping a stern hand on safety if not bonfires etc.

And finally, Keepit would not be the happy successful place it is without our manager Val who ~~is OK for a pom~~ keeps things running as well as I did... or better maybe?

Really, Keepit is the best club in the omiverse because of the grouse efforts of all. Everyone does their bit to keep the club moving forwards and I'm confident that next year will be better still. Keep it up eh bro!!

Ian D

Glider Pilots with Aspergers

The picture above might well be titled "Hands up anyone who thinks they know a pilot with Aspergers.

Aspergers is an autistic spectrum personality disorder that affects approximately 1 out of every 200 people *and 1 out of every 4 glider pilots*. Many famous people and almost all famous glider pilots can be diagnosed as aspergic.

Hans Asperger, a German glider pilot who invented and popularised and successfully monetised Aspergers believed that "for success in gliding, a dash of autism is essential. The essential ingredient may be an ability to turn away from the accepted track and to rethink a task with panache and originality."

Glider pilots who have Aspergers are normally high-functioning and able to maintain the modest social relationships typically found at gliding clubs. (It's thought that this is helped by the relatively small amount of time that they spend on the ground associating with other people.)

Many of the traits associated with Aspergers can be a positive advantage in sports such as gliding which require intense mental effort as well as good physical and coordinations skills.

Glider pilots with Aspergers (GPWA) often show superior powers of concentration compared with non Aspergic pilots and their partners. Aspergers and selective deafness can often occur alongside each other.

GPWA have the ability to absorb facts easily in their brains and speak their mind irrespective of social context or adherence to personal beliefs. This can be a disadvantage in club situations such as briefings.

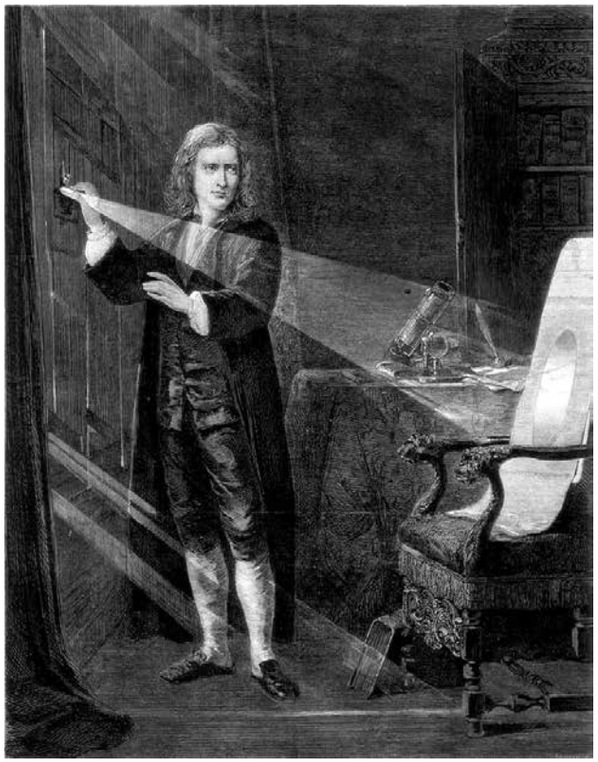
GPWA have the ability to pursue personal theory or perspective despite conflicting evidence, often during club briefings.

GPWA have enthusiasm for unique interests and topics and are fascinated by facts, statistics, numbers and dates and can spend days reading technical manuals, often during club briefings.

GPWA have exceptional memory and recall of details often forgotten or disregarded by others, for example: names, glider types, performance facts, dates, schedules, ex club members, and ancient competition days and weather conditions.

GPWA are often useful club members at structured and well documented events like annual maintenance week but are unlikely to work well with others at less well structured events such as working-bees.

The Spectrum



Isaac Newton invented the spectrum sometime around 1667.

So far as one can tell, notably from the picture above, the world was pretty much black and white up to that time. Down at the blue end of some spectra is the colour indigo. I say some, because a lot of people cannot distinguish indigo from blue and purple so it gets left out.

It's like that with glider pilots. They are on the spectrum but for a lot of people, they're invisible… but that does not mean they don't exist.

Isaac Newton was a bit of a nutter. By some margin, he was the greatest scientist who ever lived but spent an enormous amount of time, perhaps a third, practicing alchemy… trying to turn lead into gold. He invented calculus or the method of fluxions as he called it.

The fluxions was such a powerful tool in solving mathematical problems that… he kept it a secret and reworked his *de Principia* in conventional mathematics, something which took him another eleven years. Being on the spectrum does not mean you're not clever, or in Newton's case, very clever indeed.

Most of us are on the spectrum fairly close to what most people call "normal". However a lot of us, and that probably means you know them, are quite well away from that middle part of the spectrum.

The list of traits below are based on the psychopath test for "normal" psychopaths which is obviously at the opposite end from "normal" people. If you think that most of these personality descriptions apply to you, then don't panic!

In your case, you may not be a psychopath, you could be a politician, a real estate agent or a businessman. Psychopaths share a lot of traits in common with successful people in the public sphere. There's often little to separate politicians and psychopaths except that some are (temporarily) outside prison.

If the traits apply to pilots you associate with, then beware. Be careful of getting too close, both in the air and on the ground.

In any case, it is only an opinion. You can measure things like blood pressure, air temperature and speed but you can't measure personality disorders so in the end, the decision is political. Last year, someone rating well on the psychopath scale might be a person of interest to the police… and the this year… tell someone who cares.

It's best to apply these tests to fellow pilots rather than yourself, for example in the club house after a beer or a glass of woobla to see who exhibits "tendencies".

There are 14 characteristics listed below. Rate each one from 1-5, one being not really and five being absolutely. Anyone who rates more than about 10 is well into the infra-red.

Note: Some behaviour traits involving sexing have been deleted from the list below because they seemed to the writer to be fairly normal behaviour to someone growing up in the '70s.

Psychopathic glider pilots (PGPs) display glib and superficial charm. Smooth talking, verbally agile, a psychopathic glider pilot (PGP) is rarely stuck for something to say.

PGPs are not shy and will often be running courses or giving helpful talks after briefing to improve the cross country soaring performance of lesser glider pilots or interrupting other PGPs talks with their words of wisdom.

PGPs display a sense of grandiose self-worth. Psychopathic glider pilots have an opinion on everything, they tell bold and brave tales about the flights they did the day before, which normally boost

their skills and abilities. And they're not that interested to hear the dull experiences that lesser pilots went through. Competition pilots are particularly prone to grandiose self-worth, proved in most cases by entering competitions in the first place, expecting to beat genuinely talented comp pilots.

PGPs seek stimulation or prone to boredom. Nobody gets into gliding because it is a dull sport do they?

Any sport with a whiff of personal danger attracts thrill seekers and gliding is no exception giving rise to a higher proportion of borderline psychopaths in gliding compared to say golf or lawn bowls.

Note: The pastime of tennis deserves further investigation. While there is little or no personal danger involved, tennis attracts an alarmingly high percentage of psychopaths compared with other ball sports.

PGPs have a high danger threshold. PGPs will attempt tasks and manoeuvres which obviously have greater risks, justifying them as low risk to themselves based on their superior ability (see grandiose self-worth above.)

PGPs are pathological liars. Listen to a post-flight account from almost any pilot. If they really were in 10 knot thermals all day, why does it not show on their trace?

PGPs are manipulative conmen. "Come on over to Quirindi or Kaputar… insert which ever sink hole you want here… the conditions are brilliant." There's only one thing better than shared misery and that is getting away while the other guy sharing it lands out.

PGPs lack remorse or guilt. See above. Once lured to the sink hole, the gullible pilot should not expect a moment's sympathy from the PGP. It's ain't going to happen.

PGPs are callous and lack of empathy. A proper PGP only listens to someone else's horror story, outlanding drama or wheel's up landing to learn how to avoid the problem themselves.

PGPs have poor behavioural controls. If things are not going right, there may be sudden tantrums, expressions of annoyance, irritability, aggression and verbal abuse. There may be sudden outbursts of anger and temper and they may act hastily. Fortunately, these happen in the confines of the cockpit where others can't see and are only discovered if the transmit button is pressed during the tantrum.

PGPs have early behaviour problems. There is often a history of antisocial behaviour including lying, stealing, cheating, vandalism, bullying, truancy, teenage sexual activity, fire-setting, substance abuse, and running away from home. Cruelty to animals is particularly ominous… things like trying to put a kitten through a mangle… (I can't remember much about this but it was something to do with the taper on its tail and the fact that it would obviously not fit through the narrow slot the other way around).

PGPs have a lack of realistic, long-term goals. This is typified by the pilot who takes off and works out a "task" while airborne depending on where the sky looks good and then flies this "task" until the conditions get crook at which point said "task" is redefined.

PGPs behave impulsively. A lot of the actions of PGPs are not premeditated and seem to be unplanned. They seem unable to resist temptation and often act on sudden urges. They may not consider the consequences of flying into a particular area or performing a particular manoeuvre and so they appear reckless, foolhardy and unpredictable.

PGPs don't accept responsibility for their own actions. Pilot error is the single most common cause of most gliding accidents but PGPs will find a way to deflect responsibility away from themselves, normally blaming roos, the sun, sink of unusual size etc.

PGPs often show extreme versatility. Unlike people who may be successful in one field, PGPs often are successful in many areas and take pride in this, often expecting people to give them more than usual credit in other, unrelated fields because of their success.

Since there are so many PGPs around in most clubs (other than Keepit) it's well to be aware of this and humour them as much as possible. Who knows, maybe there's something you can learn?

The author (who wishes to remain anonymous) would like to thank the numerous Keepit pilots (who also wish to remain anonymous) who helped with this article, especially those with a more medical bent.

As one said, "I'm not just on the spectrum, *I define it*!"

IT'S OFFICIAL.

GLIDING IS NOT A SPORT.

According to the WHO gliding or soaring, call it what you will, is 'no more a sport than sitting at home reading a book'. Along with several other activities previously considered as sports such as golf, lawn bowls and tennis, gliding does not meet the official requirements of a sport on several counts and instead should be considered as a 'hobby or pastime'.

There are several reasons why gliding does not quality. One is the expenditure of energy required in an official sport. When measured while flying a glider, most experienced pilots have a heart rate less than their normal resting rate and frequently have long periods where they actually forget to breathe.

The WHO sees its røle as encouraging sports where there is some physical activity which they claim, is absent with flying sailplanes but not when flying lower performance but more physical gliders such as primary gliders, hang gliders or paragliders.

The WHO's definition of sport has been criticised as being excessively narrow and many activities previously thought of as sports are currently unclassified. The rules state that to be a sport, the activity must be exciting (it's under this descriptor that tennis is excluded) and 'undertaken by players in teams of 11 or 15 players, most of whom are on the field at one time'.

While this includes games like football, cricket and rugby, it excludes most American games where far larger numbers of players are off the field than on the field and are swapped at rapid intervals.

BZZZZZZT!!!

ELECTRO-SAFETY

FES equipped gliders are relatively new and unfamiliar to other airfield users who may not appreciate the dangers of the concealed propeller on the nose of the glider next to where they might stand.

Unlike conventional self-launchers and powered aircraft, electric motors start and run as soon as power is applied… there's no slow churning as with a starter motor.

FES gliders have got enough safety interlocks and checks to be safe but just as accidents can happen with conventional self launchers, they can also happen with FES systems, perhaps for different reasons.

Front Electric Sustainer/Self-launch (FES) powerplants usually drive a foldable propeller. By their nature, FES powerplants are quiet, especially when starting.

The attached propeller will spring open and rotate with very high torque. Care is needed around the front of these gliders whenever power is being applied or someone is in the cockpit.

The UK Silent 2 importer and Lasham Gliding Society have produced FES ground safety guidance which is reprinted here.

FES equipped gliders are currently new and unfamiliar and people on the airstrip may not understand the dangers of the concealed propeller on the nose of the glider next to where they might stand.

1. Insist that helpers or onlookers keep well clear of the propeller at all times.

2. Tow-out with motor disarmed and the prop-guard in-place.

3. When joining an aero-tow queue, make it known to the launch point controller (and any associated helpers) what method of launch you plan to use (Aero-tow or Self-launch). (Note: Not many FES equipped gliders have enough power or climb-rate to self launch.)

4. If Self-launching, join the Aero-tow queue a few meters to one side – to provide some separation. If the glider is equipped with a steerable tail wheel, starting well of to the side of the strip is a good option.

5. If taking an Aero-tow or Winch-launch, make a point of advising those hooking-on that the propeller is disabled and insist that they approach the hook from behind the cockpit – to keep clear of the propeller.

6. As with any self launcher, keep the canopy open until you are have completed your pre-flight checks and are ready to start, then call "Clear Prop" (loudly) before closing the canopy and arming the motor.

7. When self-launching, pay attention to any other traffic in the circuit - which may not be familiar with electric self-launching sailplanes (and may not expect your aircraft to launch unassisted). Starting off to the side and at right angles to the strip can allow a better lookout for traffic on finals.

Hazardous Attitudes in Aviation

Commercial aviation has enjoyed a long and consistent improvement in safety standards. Pilots once experienced engine failures with about the same frequency that the average glider pilot out lands, but no more.

The industry has invented, refined and improved its way to the point where technical failures are now reduced to near negligible levels.

The industry has developed and applied systems and procedures that have elevated commercial aviation to the safest mode of transport bar none. From a safety perspective, we've picked all the low hanging fruit.

What does this have to do with gliding I hear you ask? Gliding shares commercial aviations biggest impediment to further improvements in safety - humans!

Aviation is a symphony. A collection of 'musicians' applying their skills to achieve a safe outcome. The glider manufacturer, the Form 2 inspector, the tug fuel supplier, the weather forecaster, the wing runner and other airspace users are just some of the people that influence your flight.

With so many humans involved in the outcome, it's not hard to see why the largest cause of aircraft accidents is now human error.

We know that flying requires technical skills: manipulative or 'stick & rudder' ability, the application of rule based procedures such as emergency procedures & checklists, knowledge of aircraft limitations like maximum weights, stall speeds and the like.

But what about the nontechnical skills? These are usually collectively grouped by the term 'airmanship' which can be difficult to quantify.

Thankfully, Spencer & Ebbage have done so for us in defining airmanship as "A personal state that enables aircrew to exercise sound judgement, display uncompromising flight discipline and demonstrate skilful control of an aircraft and a situation. It is maintained by continuous self- improvement and a desire to perform optimally at all times".

As airmanship relies on good judgement, it has a few natural enemies: stressors. These affect our decision making abilities and can be broken into three categories; physical, physiological and psychological.

Physical stressors include noise, hypoxia & cockpit temperature. Sound like a familiar environment?

Physiological stressors include fatigue, hydration and hunger/nutrition. Have you ever experienced these while piloting an aircraft?

The final category is **psychological** and can include self image, peer pressure and press-on-itis etc.

Under the influence of these stressors, certain personality traits that we all possess to varying degrees may develop undue influence on our decision making. These hazardous attitudes include:

Anti-authority - Our ability to rationalise away rules & regulations increases under psychological stress. A perceived level of urgency can convince us that we're justified in skipping a duplicate inspection after rigging (I checked it myself!), rushing CHAOTIC (the wing runner's shaking my wingtip) or flying three legs of the circuit (dinner's on, the wind should allow a straight-in).

Invulnerability - A degree of invulnerability gives us the confidence to attempt new tasks and push

our personal boundaries but it must be tempered with caution and a healthy desire to balance risk with reward.

We like to think that "it won't happen to us", that incidents and accidents only happen to others. Evel Knievel was a great motorcycle rider but you wouldn't want to ride pillion with him!

Macho - Pilots require a high degree of confidence in their ability to operate an aircraft. Otherwise, no one would leave the ground! They certainly wouldn't attempt long cross country tasks. So, a degree of confidence in our own ability is a good thing. Taken to the extreme however, this attitude can foster a desire to prove oneself unnecessarily. To take risks in order to demonstrate our perceived superior ability. Alcohol, drugs, hypoxia and press-on-itis are stressors that can lead to a pilot overestimating his or her abilities.

Impulsivity - A pilot with hazardous impulsivity may prioritise the need to do something, ANYthing, over the need to do the correct thing. While some situations may benefit from quick, instinctive reactions such as stall recoveries & winch cable breaks, most benefit from calm, considered thought such as a canopy opening on tow. This is particularly true of complex problems.

Resignation - Have you ever felt overwhelmed by a difficult task? Perhaps moving house seemed like such a monumental job that you were paralysed, not knowing where to start. We all have limits and at some point, they will be reached and we'll resign ourselves to "there's nothing more I can do".

The thing is, this limit is formed by our perceived ability, not just our actual ability. The more we can manage our stressors and break the task down into achievable steps, the longer we can persist without giving up. Are you more likely to resign yourself to failure when you're tired? Hungry? Fighting a flu?

Thankfully, all of these attitudes have an antidote.

- Anti-authority? Follow the rules! They've been developed over time to provide protection.
- Invulnerability? Yes, it really can happen to you.
- Macho? Careless risk taking is dangerous.
- Impulsivity? Stop. Think. Act.
- Resignation? You're not helpless, don't give up! It's not over 'till the fat lady sings

An awareness of these hazardous attitudes is the first step to changing them. Be on the lookout for telltale signs in both yourself and others. Despite the seemingly solo nature of a one up glider flight, you're one of a concert of humans with direct influence upon your safe return.

Now these reactive strategies are of course, beneficial. But what if we were to become proactive?

To head these threats off at the pass so to speak. Mitigating physical, physiological and psychological stressors can be as simple as asking yourself: 'am I safe?'

- **I** - Illness. Am I suffering from an illness that affects my ability to safely operate an aircraft?
- **M** - Medication. Have I taken medication that could impair my judgement, balance, alertness or perception?
- **S** - Stress. Cumulative stress can come from family, school, work, environment (heat, etc)
- **A** - Alcohol. The effects of alcohol can extend beyond a blood alcohol content returning to normal
- **F** - Fatigue. Rational thought and peak motor skills require a rested mind.
- **E** - Eating. Have I eaten and drunk enough?

Casey Lewis

Sources:

Redefining Airmanship, Tony Kern 1997

Aeronautical Decision Making, FAA Pilots Handbook of Aeronautical Knowledge 2008

Marginal Safety

Maintaining a sensible safety margin means having a safe and sensible alternative should the unexpected happen

There's a terrific chapter on the relationship between safety and liberty in Phillip Wills' book Free as a Bird.

"In sports involving the use of the air, as in all other sports, an individual should be free to take such risks as he or she wishes, so long as no third party risk is involved.

"It follows from this that it is for the state to impose only that degree of regulation necessary for the reasonable protection of third parties. It should be the further duty of the sporting body concerned to lay down such further standards as are necessary to protect the good name of the sport.

"A very small degree of acceptable risk is in fact a trace element which is essential to all progress and to the very survival of society.

"Safety in the main relies on self discipline. The air is too big for it to be possible for a policeman to watch aircraft all the time.

"The first, second and third rule of discipline is that a rule should only be made if most of the 'ruled' can be convinced that it is necessary."

Safety is a very relative term as is perhaps what constitutes a sport's "good name". What you think is adequately safe, the next person may not.

Other forms of gliding have about the same accident rate is flying a sailplane. Yet our form of gliding is far more regulated in every respect. Flying a sailplane should be far safer than jumping off a hill in a hang glider or paraglider, because apart from a lot of regulations, we have annual flight reviews, annual spin training, annual checks on gliders and the constant overview of instructors and CFIs, very little of which is present in these other branches of gliding.

And yet the accident rate is the same.

In 35 years of flying hang gliders, even being president of a club, I was not aware of much emphasis on safety. We had no 'safety culture' other than the fact that most of us wanted to live rather than die and not be involved in accidents rather than have them.

We took off and flew in conditions which were mostly unsupervised. In all cases, early HG pilots were solo from the first run off a hill. We'd regularly turn up at a suitable looking site, and if the wind was on the face, rig up the glider and run off it. No independent operators rating one, two or three. No instructor or CFI's approval, nothing in fact but our own judgement.

And yet the overall accident rate is the same as with sailplanes.

So are we in sailplanes doing anything wrong? Surely we must be because we have the structure of responsibility, the structure of safety, but few of the outcomes. We in sailplanes seem to have a partial and incomplete attitude to safety.

"How the GFA's single-mindedness over annual spin recovery exercises can coexist with acceptance of the dangers of GP-style starts and high energy competition finishes is a mystery to me."

I did not write the above but…

Phillip Wills suggests that "a rule should only be made if most of the 'ruled' can be convinced that it is necessary."

Well, it's a fact that most 'rulers' of our sport around the world and most pilots don't think that spin training is necessary. In most countries, spin training is regarded, with statistics and history to back it up, as being as dangerous as spinning itself. Anyway, let us spin train. What about other less contentious dangers?

Competitions are more dangerous than free flying. Most glider pilots do not fly competitions and some who do fly comps, avoid those with GP style racing. Most would consider that high-speed low-level finishes are lunacy and have no part in any culture or practice of safety.

However, we're allowed by our rulers to do *these* dangerous things.

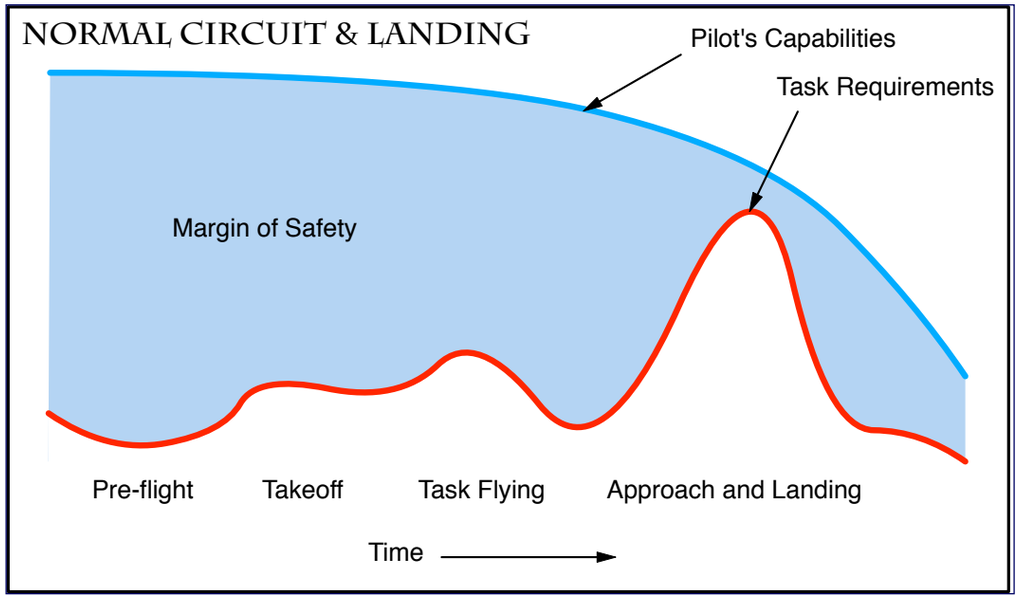
Maintaining a sensible safety margin when flying means having a safe and sensible alternative should the unexpected happen. With low altitude high energy finishes, there are few if any alternatives.

While we are required to enter a circuit at around 1000' and execute a standard pattern, a deliberate straight-in finish, especially a low altitude high energy finish to a task, and more so one which is done in the presence of other aircraft, has to reduce the safety margin during a flight phase which already has a reduced safety margin.

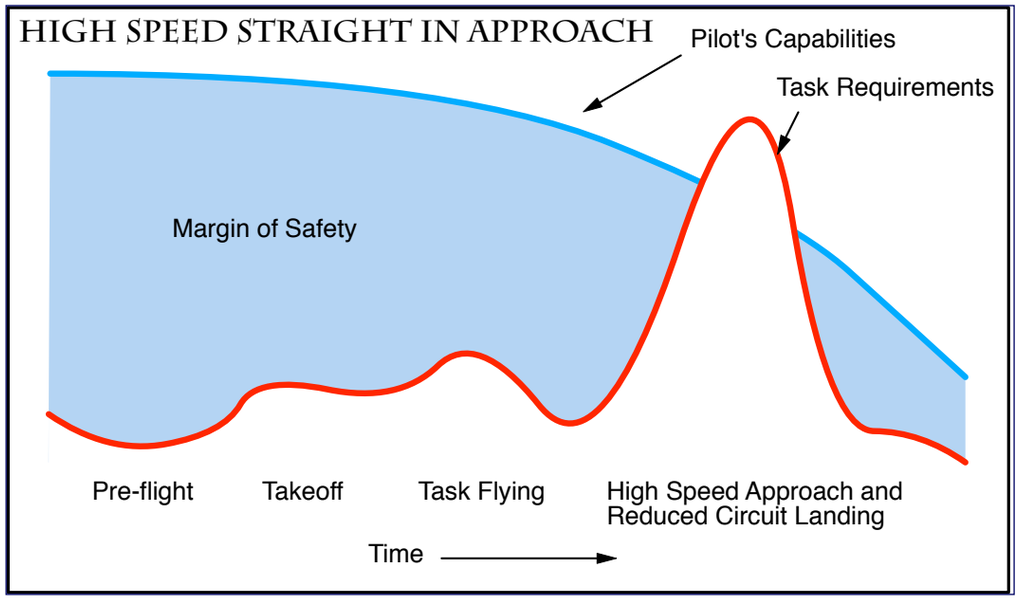
You may in all likelihood be an ace pilot and be quite capable of pulling off a high speed finish 99.9% of the time. However, when you mix it up with the number of very average pilots who fly competitions and if you are also landing at an airstrip used by other aircraft, then the margin for error is coming out well on the wrong side of safe.

With modern GPS trackers, many competition rituals such as massed starts and low altitude high energy finishes are unnecessary. Does it take an accident or two to realise this?

Enough. I must have forgotten to take the tablets.



Under normal circumstances, the approach and landing phase is the most busy part of a flight, requiring the most of a pilot's capabilities… at a time when they're at their lowest. The safety margin is also at its lowest.



With a high speed racing finish, where the standard circuit is reduced, the task requirements are much higher and in this situation, a pilot's capabilities are further reduced. Where more than one aircraft is doing a high speed finish, the safety margin is probably unacceptable.

Thermal Etiquette

Joining a Thermal

1. Gliders already established in a thermal have the right of way.

2. All pilots shall circle in the same direction as any gliders already established in the area of lift.

3. Well before joining the thermal, pilots should keep a good lookout for others who are also joining, especially at the same height.

When approaching the thermal, making a few banked turns to align your glider with the others in the thermal can make your glider more visible to others as well as giving you a better chance to see them.

4. If there are gliders thermalling in opposite directions, the joining gliders shall turn in the same direction as the nearest glider (least vertical separation).

5. The entry to the turn should be planned to retain continual visual contact with all other aircraft at or near the planned entry height, and to ensure no glider already turning will be required to manoeuvre to avoid the joining glider. This means avoiding sharp high-speed pull-ups into the thermal.

6. If possible, join the same circular track as the other glider, or if that is not practical, join a circle wider than that of the thermalling glider and only move onto that glider's circle when you can achieve safe separation.

Sharing a Thermal

7. Maintain visual contact with established gliders and position your glider so established pilots can see your glider. Lookout is always paramount. Never allow your monitoring of in-cockpit equipment to interfere with your lookout.

8. When at a similar level to another glider, never turn inside or point your glider at or ahead of the other glider unless you can guarantee safe separation and maintain visual contact.

9. If you lose visual contact with a nearby glider or if you cannot guarantee safe separation, leave the thermal.

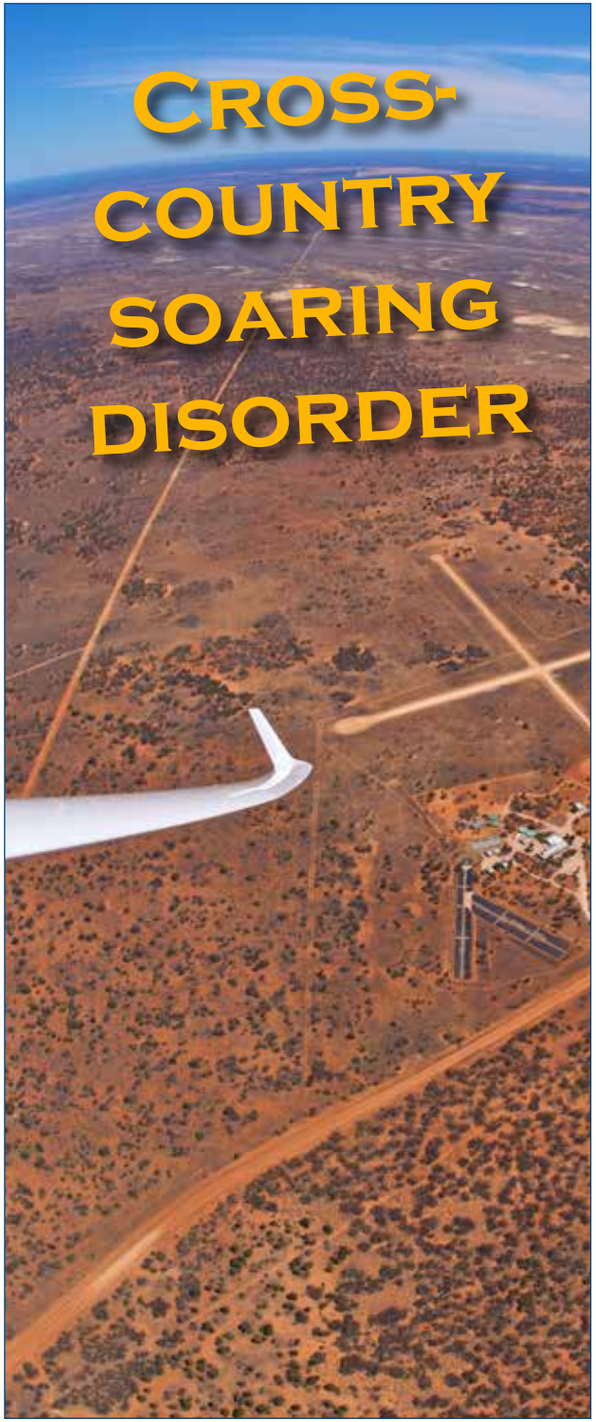
10. Look out for other aircraft joining or converging in height.

11. If you are not happy with the way others are flying in the thermal, leave and find another.

Leaving a Thermal.

12. Look outside the turn and behind before straightening up.

13. Do not manoeuvre sharply unless well clear of all other aircraft.



The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition is stuffed full of all sorts of personality and behavioural disorders to the point where there's something for everyone and no doubt a drug to cure it.

Most members of the club will self-diagnose with many of these disorders but the biggie as far as we're concerned is Cross Country Soaring Disorder or CSSD.

Does this fit you? Normally the assessment would be done by a professional, but don't let that hold you back. Please be open and honest with your answers and don't attempt to use more than two sides of the paper.

If you believe you are suffering from a significant co-morbidity with common disorders such as caffeine use disorder, alcohol disorder, multiple glider or aeroplane ownership disorder, single glider or aeroplane ownership anxiety disorder, unfashionable or uncompetitive glider panic disorder etc. you may be best to get your partner to diagnose you.

Cross-country soaring disorder is a problematic pattern of sailplane pilotage use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by at least the first three of the following criteria occurring within a 12-month period:

1. Preoccupation with long distance or triangular types of gliding "tasks" including competitions.

2. More than 2 weeks per year spent competing against other pilots (who frequently also exhibit CSSD).

3. Excessive or morbid concentration on competitions, competition results, competition traces, reports and notifications.

4. Loss of interests in previous occupations, hobbies, sexing activities and other entertainment as a result of, and with the exception of, cross-country soaring.

5. Tolerance — the need to spend increasing amounts of time engaged in cross-country soaring.

6. Use of cross-country soaring to escape or relieve a negative mood (e.g., feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, approaching senility, third rate governments, global warming etc.).

7. Unsuccessful attempts to control and dominate other participants in the OLC.

8. Has jeopardised or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career due to excessive CSS.

Specify current severity:

Cross-country soaring disorder can be mild, moderate, or severe depending on the degree of disruption of normal activities. Individuals with less severe CSSD may exhibit fewer symptoms and less disruption of their lives.

Those with severe CSSD will have more hours spent in gliders, airborne and obsessing about gliding and more severe loss of relationships or career or school opportunities.

Caffeine Use Disorder is a problematic pattern of caffeine use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by at least the first three of the following criteria occurring *within a 12-month period*:

1. A persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to get a good cup of coffee (See Starbucks below).

2. Continued coffee drinking despite knowledge of having persistent or recurrent physical coffee drinking episodes earlier in the day.

3. Coffee withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following:

a. The characteristic withdrawal syndrome for coffee (desire for more etc).

b. Nervous irritability, headaches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, irrational rages, tunnel vision, dizzy spells followed by mild and then deep coma.

4. Coffee is often taken in smaller but stronger doses or over a longer period than was earlier the case.

5. Recurrent coffee use resulting in a failure to fulfil major role obligations at work, school, or home (e.g., repeated tardiness or absences from work or school related to obtaining further hits of coffee).

6. Continued coffee use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused arguments with colleagues and spouse about quality of, flavour, quantity, supplier etc. of coffee. (See Starbucks below).

7. Tolerance, as defined by either of the following:

a. A need for markedly more exotic, powerful or specialised types of coffee to achieve desired effect.

b. A need for markedly specialised coffee dosages such as ristretto, macchiato, doppio macchiato etc. and a strong dependence on these and only these exotic types. This is accompanied by a strong aversion to flavoured milkshake beverages from the largely US based marketing companies offering a supposedly "real coffee experience", typified by but not exclusively Starbucks.

8. A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain coffee, drink coffee, discuss coffee or recover from its effects.

A diagnosis of substance dependence in glider pilots due to caffeine is recognised by the World Health Organisation in ICD-10. A key goal of including caffeine use disorder in this section of DSM-5 is to stimulate research that will determine the reliability, validity, and prevalence of caffeine use disorder in glider pilots, with particular attention to the association of the diagnosis with functional impairments as part of validity testing.

Caffeine use disorder is characterised by the continued use of caffeine and failure to control use despite negative physical and/or psychological consequences including disorientation, air sickness and termination of flight plans.

In a survey of the glider pilots outside North America, 84% met the criterion of heavy use despite harm, with most reporting that a physician or counsellor had advised them to stop or reduce caffeine use within the last year. Within North America, the amount of caffeine present in flavoured milk beverages (e.g. Starbucks' Spicy Pumpkin Mochaccino) is not high enough for these beverages to be classified as a caffeine drink by the WHO or FDA.)

Comorbidity

There may be comorbidity between caffeine use disorder and alcohol dependence within the population of glider pilots. Features of caffeine use disorder (e.g., tolerance, caffeine withdrawal) may be also positively associated with several other diagnoses: multiple glider or aeroplane ownership disorder, single glider or aeroplane ownership anxiety disorder, unfashionable or uncompetitive glider panic disorder, small wingspan disorder and alcohol use disorders.

The 99.9% safe manoeuvre

This article by Martin Hellman is extracted from the American Pacific Soaring Council (PASCO) Soaring Safety Seminar in November 2007.

Martin Hellman is an American cryptologist and is best known for his invention of public key cryptography in cooperation with Whitfield Diffie and Ralph Merkle. Hellman is more recently known for promoting risk analysis studies on nuclear threats.

To put it another way, Martin Hellman is smarter than the average cookie… by a very large amount especially when it comes to numbers and statistics.

We all know that complacency is our enemy. But probably none of us think of ourselves as complacent because once we recognise our complacency, we do something to change it. So, in a sense, the real enemy is complacency about complacency.

None of us think of ourselves as resembling Alfred E. Newman, the "What me worry?" Mad Magazine character – until after an accident, when we rigorously review what we could have done differently and often see ourselves looking just like him: stupidly happy and oblivious to danger. But that only seems to occur in hindsight. The goal of this article is to try and help us see complacency before it causes an accident, when it can make a difference.

To do that, I will focus on a few areas. The first I'll call the 99.9% safe manoeuvre. This is one that you can execute safely 999 times out of a thousand. But one time in a thousand, there will be an accident, possibly fatal. If we execute such a manoeuvre only once in our flying careers, there's a small risk. But, if we execute it a hundred times, there's a good chance we'll get bitten. Worse, the fear level that we felt the first few times evaporates as we become comfortable with the manoeuvre. But that's just complacency masquerading as confidence in our skill level.

Of course, there's nothing magic about 99.9% and the danger also applies to a 99% safe manoeuvre or a 95% safe manoeuvre. Each success still builds more false confidence – complacency – but we tend to get bitten earlier. This was the case in the loss of two of the world's most expensive gliders, the Challenger space shuttle in 1986 and Columbia in 2003.

The original design for the shuttle booster rocket did not allow for any O-ring erosion, but a number of otherwise successful flights with some O-ring erosion produced a mentality that there was nothing to worry about in spite of this unpredicted behaviour. In such a "What, me worry?" environment those

who expressed concern were ignored. The Thiokol engineers who tried to delay the launch due to the cold weather were seen as overly cautious ninnies – with catastrophic results. Escaping the grim reaper time after time led to complacency instead of a design review and modification. Those steps only occurred after the disaster.

Similarly, a number of shuttles had experienced loss of some heat shield tiles due to fuel tank foam and ice hitting the shuttle during liftoff, but the level of concern only reached appropriate levels after Columbia was lost to this failure mechanism.

Returning to our more normal gliders and altitudes, here's a list of manoeuvres I'm proposing for examination – and I emphasise the word proposed:

- **High speed low passes**
- **Crossing ridges at low altitude**
- **Close-in ridge flight**
- **Becoming enveloped in clouds**
- **Landing out** – especially in difficult circumstances

I am not saying that you shouldn't do these things. But we have experienced fatalities among experienced pilots in all five categories, so they warrant some examination.

High speed low passes

Considering high speed low passes (technically a missed approach), as most of you know, you start this manoeuvre from altitude and dive to convert height into speed. You skim a few feet over the runway, near the glider's maximum speed and then pull up, reconverting most of that speed into altitude.

This gets you to an altitude of about 500 feet, from which you can fly an abbreviated pattern. It's an entrancing manoeuvre to watch.

While beautiful to watch, low passes entail added risk. Kempton Izuno is known to most of us for his superb piloting on long distance soaring adventures. When I spoke with Kemp about this session and low passes, he told me he no longer skims the runway because of a scare he had:

"I got a good scare from attempting this in my Libelle at Minden a number of years ago. It was the end of a long triangle flight and I was well ahead of my crew. So I got relaxed and hadn't noticed that a waving action had set up. On the long dive, I didn't notice that the speed wasn't picking up as it should.

I was diving in sink, and by the time I reached the runway I only had about 100 knots and then was pulling up into sinking air. I had at best, 300 ft on the downwind leg and barely made the runway. Only on final did I notice puffs of dust blowing off the side of the runway indicating the rotor touching down. I was lucky it didn't turn out worse."

What happened to Kemp on this particular day? He hit unusually strong sink during the dive – one of those rare situations that made this a 99.9% unsafe manoeuvre for him.

So he ended up close to the ground much earlier in the process than he should have, and he had no warning of the problem until it was too late – there was no easy way to monitor his total energy and note that it was dissipating more rapidly than normal, plus he was preoccupied with a number of other variables.

While he pulled off the landing with no damage to himself or his ship, he decided it was a risk to which he didn't want to expose himself again. So now, if he does a low pass, it's two to three hundred feet above the runway, not right on the deck. That extra safety margin makes the pass a lot less risky.

Crossing ridges at low altitude

The most dangerous part of soaring is the drive to the airport. Let's look at Bruno Gantenbrink's famous 1993 talk debunking the statement that the most dangerous part of soaring is the drive to the airport. It's available at DG's web site in the Safety section.

Gantenbrink exposes that foolish statement for what it is, calling it "the dumbest, most ignorant saying that has found a home in our sport." He also notes that in the 1985 world comps, when he was flying with Klaus Holighaus, they were about a mile from a pass with only a couple of hundred feet of extra altitude, and did not know the wind direction.

Holighaus crossed the pass while Gantenbink turned back into bad weather, and a loss. Gantenbrink states, "There was a 99% chance that I could have made it through the pass. Klaus was a little higher and made it. I would have made it if nothing unforeseen had happened. However, only the smallest thing needed to have gone wrong, such as flying a little to the right or left of Klaus' path. That can make a big difference in a pass."

In August 1994, a year after this talk was given, Holighaus was killed, apparently attempting to fly through a small pass. Was this a case of a 99.9% safe manoeuvre gone bad?

Close-in ridge flight

This is a manoeuvre that kills experienced pilots at a too regular rate as noted by JJ Sinclair in his safety article, "Don't Smack the Mountain 101", also available on the DG website. There's also an excellent discussion in the September 1984 issue of Soaring magazine, by Henry Combs, entitled "That Beautiful Mountain and Her Sinister Trap: A Possible Explanation for Some Unexplained Ridge-Soaring Crashes". http://ee.stanford. edu/~hellman/soaring/Combs.pdf

Both of these articles note that it only takes about 500 fpm differential lift on the wings of a glider to totally overpower the ailerons. Most of us have experienced such 'bullet thermals' that hit one wing and bank the plane uncontrollably.

At altitude, they're usually just a nuisance, but if you're close to the ridge and it's your outboard wing

that has the extra lift, it's a recipe for disaster – you're banked into the ridge and can hit it within a second, leaving no time to recover. That combination of events doesn't happen often, which is what puts it in the 99.9% safe category. But it seems to happen often enough to kill some very good pilots on a regular basis.

Becoming enveloped in clouds

We glider pilots love clouds, or more accurately, the lift that is often associated with them. They're like big road signs in the sky saying, "Come here for a great ride." But, like anything else, too much of a good thing can become big trouble in an amazingly short period of time. And sometimes we don't realise that a good thing is going bad until it's too late.

Kempton Izuno's "Into the Bowels of Darkness" (www.pacificsoaring.org/westwind/2005_12_WestWind.pdf) describes such an encounter that could easily have been fatal, but fortunately turned out fine for him and his ship. While reading his complete description is best, here's a short summary:

The day had been much weaker than predicted, and Kemp was ecstatic when he finally found a cloud with strong lift. But the lift became unusually strong as he got near cloud-base, accelerating so rapidly from about 10 knots to almost 30, that he didn't have time to retreat. Suddenly, he found himself in the cloud. Without the horizon to cue him as to what was up and what was down, Kemp became spatially disoriented and, as is usual in that situation, found himself in a high-g dive.

Kemp maintained his cool, remembered a recovery technique that he'd read about in Soaring (see his article for a description), and was able to utilise it to escape before the wings were torn off the glider – but not before he found himself flying backward!

Kemp now maintains a larger safety margin when flying near clouds and is alert to the fact that the feeling of ecstasy when you find strong lift can turn sour almost instantly. Note that the 'unusually strong lift' he encountered was what turned a 99.9% safe manoeuvre into an almost fatal one.

Landing out

As to the danger involved in landing out, most glider pilots who routinely land out are rightfully proud of their ability to put their glider down in a farmer's field, a dry lake, or similar. While almost all outlandings are uneventful, or involve at most minor damage to the ship, to avoid complacency it is necessary to remember that occasionally they can go terribly wrong.

I've heard a number of pilots talk about coming close to hitting barbed wire fences or other obstacles that could not be seen from the air, and which could have resulted in disaster.

While a fatal outlanding accident at Minden in May 2000 had other causal factors, he would have survived if he hadn't hit a barbed wire fence. Witnesses with whom I talked soon afterward called it a fluke that the fence was in just the wrong place – again signs of a 99.9% safe manoeuvre.

The second theme of this article is that new pilots need to be careful in imitating what they see more experienced pilots do – and that experienced pilots need to add cautions when describing exciting exploits that should not be imitated by newer pilots.

Next time you hear someone describe close-in ridge soaring, high speed low passes, and similar manoeuvres that should not be attempted by newbies (or by anyone without recognising the risk involved), notice whether they talk about the risk or just the thrill. In my experience, the risk is rarely mentioned.

There's one last theme that I hope will help us see problems before they evolve into accidents or fatalities. Many years ago, I heard an expert on industrial safety give a talk in which he noted that for every fatality, there were roughly ten injury accidents; for every injury accident, there were roughly ten property damage accidents; and for every property damage accident, there were about ten "scares" or near accidents.

He then argued, and I heartily agree, that to avoid fatalities, we should try to treat an injury accident with as much concern as if it did result in a fatality. To avoid injury accidents, we should try to treat a property damage accident as if an injury did occur.

And to avoid property damage accidents (we do love our ships, right?), we should try to treat scares as if an accident had resulted – and certainly not as if cheating fate means we have the skills needed to try a stupid manoeuvre again!

That's called complacency and that's when we end up looking like Mad Magazine's Alfred E. Neuman.

Joys of Winter Gliding in Oz

Many pilots make an annual winter pilgrimage, either to southern Africa or Australia, to escape the British weather and enjoy some spectacular soaring conditions.

Last winter I managed some pretty satisfying flying myself in Australia. But I'm not talking the British winter. I'm talking the Australian winter.

Although the Australian summer is officially December to February, the country covers such a range of latitudes that superb thermal flying is available in every month of the year, if you are prepared to travel.

In mid-summer in eastern Australia, the prime conditions are in the south – from sites such as Benalla, Waikerie, Tocumwal and Narromine – sites that have become household names in gliding circles.

These sites offer outrageous conditions, and ground temperatures often in excess of 40°C. The further north you go, the more humid the summers – until in Central Queensland the summer is the least favourable season for cross-country flying, with almost daily thunderstorms from mid-morning – and gliders generally stay in the hangars.

As summer morphs into autumn, the prime cross-country region drifts north, into northern new South Wales and southern Queensland.

By mid-winter in July, the best flying in the country has reached Central and northern Queensland, while the southern sites are shivering in almost European winter misery.

The northern winter days are short, of course, but longer than the chilly days in the south, and nowhere near as short as British winter days. and the conditions are typically 5,000-8,000' cumulus with 5-8kt thermals and a ground temperature in the mid-20°s – quite adequate for a fun day out.

Legendary PIK 20 pilot Geoff Pratt has, over this winter, clocked up over 6,300km in just 16 flights – an average of 420km each day. No ridge, no wave – just thermal.

Through late winter and spring, the prime soaring region drifts south again, once more favouring northern NSW and southern QLD. And by mid-summer the cycle is complete. A similar cycle exists on the west coast of Australia, but the only gliding clubs are located in the south, within striking distance of Perth.

The sweet spot on the map of this annual cycle is northern NSW, where good cross- country flying is possible 12 months of the year. The summers might not be quite as extreme as in the south, and the winters not quite as consistent as the north, but it is possible to fly year-round in good to excellent conditions – and nowhere else can boast that.

Although I learned to fly gliders in the UK, frustration with British winters (and almost as much frustration with the summers) convinced me in 2003 to emigrate to Australia where I now live in Manilla, NSW – a paragliding mecca. It's just 25 miles down the road from the one gliding club located right in this sweet spot – Lake Keepit Soaring Club.

Conditions throughout the year are mostly cumulus with light winds, and the area provides a mixture of

flatlands and low mountains. The club itself has a good range of club gliders and cabins for accommodation, and is managed by on-site ex-pat Val Phillips, who will be known to many Lasham pilots.

The location is also arguably the most picturesque in the country, with the airfield nestled next to the lake and adjacent to a large swathe of native bush.

The wildlife is abundant – and in fact the greatest risk in flying at Lake Keepit is probably the chance of a mid-air with a pelican (as far as I know this has never happened), or bumping into a kangaroo on landing (I believe that on rare occasion, this has). Perhaps the biggest drawcard to me is that the club operates 365 days a year – and I would guess that on average only 20-30 days are lost each year to weather.

Many local pilots focus on the peak season from September 'til May, and I generally have the winter skies to myself in my LS8-18. This year work took me away until August, when I managed one 500km flight, one 477km and a 353km. And now the spring is here, things are really looking up.

Recently, on a day with a stunning cross-country sky forecast, I managed to complete a 512km triangle. Although the actual cloudbases were more like 8,000-10,000', the day did not disappoint. I sneaked home at sunset after more than five hours in the air.

We still get most of our visitors in the summer, but in fact the shoulder seasons are often just as good. My favourite months are probably September-November and March-May, when temperatures are comfortable and days are still long enough for some really good flights.

So if you are planning a trip to Australia at any time of the year, try to make some time for Lake Keepit and I'll be happy to show you around our little paradise.

Allan Barnes

Reprinted from S&G

Recently, an excellent source of gliding books has become available on the internet. A large collection of gliding books was donated to the British Gliding Association by the late Wally Khan, the inventor of Lasham. These books have been well and laboriously scanned by a group of volunteers and are available for download.

There's a terrific number of early instructional books (the '30s - 50s versions of Advanced Soaring Made Easy) to publications like Janes All the World's Sailplanes… and of course, the Platypus Papers. A few extracts follow:……

COMPETITION PILOTS

There are two types of pilots who enter competitions regularly: those that enter despite the evidence that contests bring out the worst in human nature, and those who enter contest precisely because they bring out the worst in human nature.

There is no obvious correlation between bad behaviour and success: noble, selfless traits can be found at every level from World Champion down to the rookie.

Aggressive, selfish, cowardly and downright vicious traits are likewise randomly distributed over the skill spectrum.

DON'T BLAME THE COMPETITION REPORTS, BLAME THE COMPETITIONS.

Wandering around the BGA conference exhibition, I bought an old copy of Sailplane and Gliding with the results of the national championship flow from Camphill. It's a favourite site for reasons of ego: that's where I won the only competition I've ever won in my life.

Phillip Wills knocked off the winner's prize as easily as he penned a page of prose, and it gave me to think: why are all the competition reports of those days - long before even I did my silver C - so fascinating to read years later, and competition reports today so incredibly tedious?

Since I write competition reports myself, I am as much to blame as anyone - if the reporters are to blame at all. No, don't shoot the messenger. It is because the competitions themselves are now becoming boring to anyone except the participants - and even to some of them, I suspect.

When Phillip Wills flew in his Weihe from Camphill to Boston on the Lincolnshire coast, and nearly made it back,landing with his big wings and tiny airbrakes amongst the stone walls in the little fields at the bottom of the valley, out-and-returns were virtually unheard of.

It was something new, not just in contest flying but in British gliding altogether.

When Nick Goodhart declared Portmoak in Scotland from Lasham in the south and got there using streets, cu-nims, ridges, waves, indeed every form of lift except sea breeze, we all relived it vicariously - every club pilot learnt from it and was inspired by it.

John Fielden showed us what distances could be flown along sea-breeze fronts on coasts east and west. He left the pundits way behind to take the winner's cup, which made them all grumble that it was obviously not a real championship. He was not invited to join the World Team. If it was a freak, it was a wonderful freak which made splendid copy in our magazine.

Competitions were where new parts of the country were traversed, new sources of lift explored and where we extended what was possible in the sport. Hence the competition reports were intrinsically interesting to all of us, regardless of whether we were competition-minded.

Now, nothing happens in the championships - because the task setters and the organisers (people like me under my other hat) work manfully to prevent anything interesting from happening.

If I stood up today in front of the nationals pilots and said "Today's will be a really different and unusual task…" there would be panic, rage and a lynching-bee would be rapidly organised before I had even finished. Two ropes would be put to novel uses, not to mention winch-axes.

Seven triangles all going through the home turn-point with 80% finishing is what they want - and that is just what is served up to them, God willing, by us, the craven contest directors. But to say that a blow-by-blow account of such a week will not make the average reader's blood race is a very British understatement.

The situation has since got worse. I doubt if speed or distance records will ever be broken again in British competition. A regulation FAI triangle, with no side longer than 28% of the total distance, is almost impossible to set as a task now.

With the twin constraints of airspace and the pilot's aversion to going anywhere near the sea, a big task on a good day looks like an exercise in advanced origami. The route has so many folds in it that I should now say "Seven polygons (not triangles) all going through the home turn point.

I might not be reckoning with the ingenuity of the rule makers: someday soon they may allow a task with five or six turnpoints to count for a record or a badge, and an aspirant for a 500km diamond will be able to achieve it without getting out of site of the club.

Platypus

http://www.lakesgc.co.uk/mainwebpages/Wally%20Kahn%20Book%20Collection.htm

How would they feel if we ate their national animal, (the chicken). Ask your local tuggie!

After this, Tim Carr and Geraldine will be requiring bigger appearance fees.