

Booker Gliding Club

Newsletter

December
2024

2024

A look back at another busy year



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR
LOYAL MEMBERS, STAFF AND
FRIENDS



In this issue.....

... we take a look back at 2024, busy with plenty of activity and achievements, working on improvements to the airfield and our facilities, having fun and staying safe.

Members' achievements

FIRST SOLOS

Flying solo for the first time is a significant step in learning to fly, so congratulations to all.

Mika Risicato went solo some years ago in Australia, he has now added a UK solo.



Gary Fletcher is usually busy with his kayaking adventures all over the world, but he found time to achieve a solo glider flight.

Phil Bellamy tried gliding as a youngster, he has now taken it up again and achieved his solo this summer.



Adam Binns joined us from White Waltham where he flies things with engines, he has now discovered pure flight.

Phil Binnee has returned to gliding after a lay-off and has re-soloed. He is now looking to revive his Basic Instructor rating.



Silke Furbatto, one of our Juniors, went solo while her mother watched from the ground. Silke is currently taking the first steps on her path to be an airline pilot.

Dean Blair usually flies power planes at Fairoaks but has now taken to gliding. After his solo he achieved a Bronze hour, converted to the Pegase and ASW19, and is training as a tug pilot.



David Harborne, veteran of several expeditions to Aboyne and Denbigh, finally put his experience to effect and got round to flying on his own

Deiniol Heywood took a relaxed approach to his training, no rush, and achieved his first solo in September.



Shashank Dhannamneni, at 14 the youngest of our Juniors, went solo in October and has done several more since.

TYPE CONVERSIONS

The Pegase was a favourite, with **Chey Anich**, **Mika Risicato**, **Phil Bellamy** and **Juniors Tom Hubscher** and **Archie Gherendi** discovering single-seaters, and **Dean Blair** also added the ASW19.

BADGES

John Otty took advantage of the Aboyne expedition to achieve a **Diamond Height** gain of 5000m, taking in **Gold Height** on the way up. He now has all three Diamonds (the others are Diamond Goal – 300km getting back to where you started, and Diamond Distance – 500km). Here is John landing after his epic height gain.





Simon Jones completed his **Silver** with a 5-hour flight and a height gain of 1000m. He is now working towards a **Basic Instructor** rating.

Dean Miller and **Adam Binns** passed the **Bronze exam** and now have their **Bronze badges**.

Tom Hubscher, **Archie Gherendi** and **Dean Blair** have achieved **hour-long flights** towards their **Bronze** badges.

INSTRUCTOR RATINGS



Bob Smith qualified as a **Flight Instructor Coach**

John Otty and **Luke Bishop** gained **Assistant Instructor** ratings.



COMPETITIONS

Tim Scott achieved second place in the **56th International Hahnweide Competition**, Germany, a great performance. He completed in the **15m Nationals** at Aston Down, winning one day and coming second on another, with a final place at 5th.

He has also been voted onto the **team to represent Great Britain** at the 39th World Gliding Championships at Tabor, Czechia in June 2025, in the 15m class. Says Tim: *"I'm 5th on the list so unlikely to go but still pleased to be on the list."*





Jan McCoshim and **Ashley Birkbeck** took part in **Dunstable Regionals**. Jan won a day in her class and came 3rd overall. Ashley flew consistently throughout and came a creditable 6th in his class.



Expeditions

Booker likes to go places, and our expeditions are open to all, from pre-solo to pundit. Flying from another site in different conditions is an excellent way to learn or polish skills. And it's a great way to get to know your fellow members.



Wave at the seaside, North Wales coast

The **March** expedition to **Lleweni Parc, Denbigh** enjoyed good weather with opportunities for wave and thermal flights as well as shaking off the winter cobwebs with a few crosswind landings. With only three scrub days exploration of the local area was limited but there was one day out to the

interesting city of Chester with its city walls and fine cathedral. Many thanks to **Steve Williams** and **Doug Hilton** for leading the expedition.

In **May**, while the airfield was closed for an event, there was a trip to **Aston Down**, home to Cotswold Gliding Club. Members



new to expeditions were able to practise circuits at an unfamiliar site, fly cross-countries over the Severn and into Wales, and even try out winch-launching. Many thanks to **Jon Sugden** for looking after everyone.

October saw the club back at **Aboyne**, Aberdeenshire, for the annual fix of wave flying over the Cairngorms. The weather was a distinct improvement on 2023's storms and floods and members enjoyed plenty of wave, with a couple of Diamond height climbs – John Otty (see above) and Ashley Birkbeck who already had his badge – as well as cross-country explorations. Many thanks to **Richard Crockett** for leading the expedition.

Sun on the Dee



First snow of the year on the Cairngorms



Ready to launch on runway 27

Task weekends

Over the summer, in order to encourage members to improve their soaring and cross-country skills, **Paul Brice** organised a series of task weekends to help members develop their skills.

Pre-solo and early solo pilots had the opportunity to fly in two-seaters practising mini-shuffles close to the airfield, while those with more experience attempted longer tasks. The typical UK summer weather produced its challenges and a few people had some land-out practice but had a good – and safe – time and learned more about cross-country flying.



A view of where Chiltern Park used to be

This comment from Simon Jones about one of his flying days sums it up:

It was a great day. I was really thrilled to manage a 100k XC in 319 and compared to my 50k for my Silver Distance it was really amazing to work my way back and realise I was in shooting distance back to Booker. Having to then turn away to Huntercombe though soon changed that as the sky died. I'd picked a field but managed to scrape home in some weak lift. Only 49kph task speed but that hardly seems the point. Just great to be out with so many club mates!

The [2025 programme](#) includes four task weekends – the first one over Easter – plus a whole task week in August.



Instructor news



Over the summer we benefited from having **Ollie Roberts** as weekday instructor. Ollie worked very hard, not only on flying days but also taking on other tasks around the club that needed doing – washing trailers, putting together the new picnic tables outside the club house, spending hours on the newly acquired mower. He is spending the winter in the sunshine at Tocumwal in Australia, where he will find soaring conditions very different from the UK. And we will see him again in October in Aboyne where he has secured an instructor position.



We also welcomed **Adam Berrisford**, who has taken over as CFI from Richard Crockett. Adam has many years of successful gliding instructing at different sites and brings a wealth of experience to our training.

Improvement projects

As everyone knows, the field has become very bumpy as a result of being left to grow hay during 2020 and not having been rolled for some years. **Paul Brice** led a project to buy a ride-on mower



Mower driving school – Tim discards his L plates

– helped by contributions from a generous group of members – which was then used to mow a wide strip the length of the airfield. This required many passes, setting the cutter lower each time, the mowing team are

to be commended for their patience in spending hours going up and down and up and down..... The result is a noticeably smoother ground run, and the tugs are able to get in the air much more quickly on shorter grass.

Further improvement has been achieved by rolling – **Tim Scott** has been spending a lot of time grinding up and down towing the airfield's roller.



Putting January to good use, **Bob Smith** overhauled all the club batteries and built a new charging station, with colour coding on chargers and batteries, and lots of labels

Lead acid batteries (the heavy ones) plug into the orange chargers on the original shelf unit, and lithium batteries (the lighter ones) plug into the blue chargers on the new station.



The clubhouse received a facelift with some new picnic tables – generously donated by **John Hubberstey** – to replace the dangerously rotten ones which were really lowering the tone.

Ollie proved quite handy with a screwdriver.



Summertime.....

We flew our usual crop of **school groups**, introducing young people to aviation, thanks to the generosity of the **Honourable Company of Air Pilots**. Flying large groups requires a slick operation by instructors and ground crew, as well as reasonable weather. Fortunately we have had a lot of practice and everyone had a good time. Here are a couple of them:



The **Marketing Team** got out and about, bringing gliding to the attention of those who have not yet had the good fortune to try it. Every year we are invited to take the **simulator** to White Waltham for West London Aero Club's Members' Day, the day was busy with a steady stream of visitors keen to try the sim.



Once back at base, the sim was soon in use again, here's Duncan practising launch failures. A great deal of dedication on the part of a team with amazing tech skills has resulted in an upgraded simulator which is now available for training sessions



Social events and awards

In February we enjoyed a curry feast produced by ace chef **Fiona Luck**, it was a great opportunity to get together and forget about the weather. In December we had another curry event, this time catered by a local restaurant as Fiona is currently overseas. The evening was an opportunity to present awards to a number of members – a task kindly undertaken by **Anne Tabbner**. The awards were as follows:

Geoff Tabbner award

An instructor who has significantly inspired and developed students and members throughout the course of the year – voted for by all members.

Bob Smith

Joint second - Paul Brice, Ollie Roberts

Bob said: *It's a great honour to receive the Geoff Tabbner award. Volunteering and instructing at a gliding club can be a challenge but it is also extremely rewarding. Instructing is always fun and even teaching a small step like lining up on a heading, or getting the hang of the aerotow, is satisfying and it is reward enough when the student masters the technique. There is a huge scope for volunteering at all gliding clubs, I am glad to do my bit and it is great that this has been recognised. There are many other instructors who devote a lot of time and energy at Booker so I encourage everyone to vote again next year so that others get the recognition they deserve.*



Instructors award

The most promising member who has not only progressed considerably over the past year, but who also shows great promise for the future – voted for by the instructors.

Simon Jones

Second place - Dean Blair



Glyn Read award

The most promising member under the age of 23 who has not only progressed considerably over the past year, but who also shows great promise for the future – voted for by the instructors.

Archie Gherendi

Second place - Tom Hubscher

Chairman's award

A club member who over the past year has volunteered a significant amount of their time to the club to better it for others, both now and in the future – voted for by all members.

Jane Moore

Equal second place - Bob Smith, Graham Saw,
Robin Willgoss, Duncan Reed



Jane said: *It is of course great to have one's efforts recognised, and I am grateful for the vote of confidence, but there are many others who volunteer their time on a wide range of tasks, they are just not quite so visible as me. Helping out is a great way to be involved and feel more part of the club, even if you have limited time to offer. There are plenty of tasks which require no specialist skills, and others which offer learning opportunities. If you have spotted a gap, or would like to offer some time, just have a chat with one of the committee and we will soon find you something to do!*



Farewells

This year we were saddened by the deaths of four former stalwarts of the club. All played a part in aiding and developing club members while they were active club members, although sadly, their flying membership at Booker came to an end well before many of today's members joined up.

Dave Caunt - famed for long and adventurous flights in his Nimbus, as well as instructing and tugging



John Tournier – a stalwart of the vintage scene



Doug Walker – ran the Wednesday evening group for 12 years and had sent over 100 people solo by the time he stopped instructing.



Colin Marsh – joined in the 1960s and a long-time member of the Tuesday evening group



And finally.....

A huge thank you to everyone who helps to keep the show on the road – the visible ones - instructors, tuggies and launchpoint helpers – and also those who look after the buggies and bus, fix the computers, mow the grass, empty the bins, anyone who notices something that needs doing, and gets on and deals with it. Not forgetting **Jenni** in the office, **John** and **Paul** in the tug workshop, **Ollie** our summer instructor, **Adam** our CFI, and the **committee**. The club could not operate without you.

Winter hours

Office

Jenni is in the office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The email address is office@bookergliding.co.uk Emails received on other days will be answered, but not so promptly.

Flying

Throughout the winter, Trial lessons and courses will be flown on Saturdays and Sundays. Flying on weekdays will be for members and those on courses, on demand, arranged on Whatsapp.

Festive opening times

Airfield closed 24th – 31st December 2024, reopening 1st January 2025

Dates for your diary (subject to change)

2025

All the dates you need to know maybe found [here](#).

Club Communications

We use WhatsApp groups, as below:

Booker Gliding Club – general club information and notifications including details of online daily briefings

Booker Instructors – information and swap requests for instructors

Booker Expeditions – set up in the run up to each expedition.

Booker XC – for tasks, cross country discussion and feedback

If you wish to be included in any of these groups, contact the CFI.

Booker Chat - for general chitchat – contact Jane Moore

Condor Flyers – for those wanting to join in Condor group sessions – contact Bob Smith or Henry Ross or ask for a link on the main Whatsapp group.

The **Booker GC website** at www.bookergliding.co.uk has a Members Page. This contains the latest Club news snippets and links to previous newsletters, meeting minutes and several useful and informative Club documents. The Members' page is accessible to everybody (not just members) but certain documents, such as committee minutes need a user ID and password. To obtain these, go to the members' page and click on the 'email Administrator' link. Don't forget to *include your name and membership number*.

For the latest news about what's happening check out

<http://bookergc.blogspot.com/> and
<https://www.facebook.com/bookerglidingclub>

All views expressed within the newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Club or committee

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome. If you would like to submit an article for a future edition please send it to Jane Moore at jxmoore@gmail.com

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