

The 7th June was scheduled for an electric glider competition at Flamstone run by the Wessex Aeromodellers League. The day started with blue sky and little wind. By 10 a.m. over a dozen pilots were on site, most with two or more models and some with alternative wing sets. One set had silver reflective covers – cool!

A number of families were there being self contained with chairs and refreshments. They were no problems.

A light North breeze appeared to be maintaining an area of blue sky over our site whilst the surrounding area was building fair weather cumulus. Thus, early attempts to maintain height gave modest results, but later ‘our cumulus’ arrived and lift became available. A couple of full size sailplanes were seen taking advantage of the thermals.

The fact that models were being launched into the North wind, gave really good visibility for pilots without blinding from the sun.

The nature of this competition had evolved from a basic aim to be ‘cheap on the pocket’ to embracing the need for more modern technology, this giving hybrid models i.e. using brushless motors with NiMH batteries. There was a practical reason for this. The use of light LiPo batteries would have needed structural changes to the existing models to restore centre of gravity positions. Adding lead wouldn’t be a better option and many would consider NiMH batteries safer. Battery cut out voltage needed a speed controller matched to both systems, but this wasn’t an issue given the short motor runs. All pilots seemed to be using 2.4 GHz equipment.

Following the often quoted ‘Everyone shall be equal but some more equal’, the models had the same propellers, the same motors and speed controllers, even the same batteries (from the same suppliers) BUT the design of models was open to individual creativity and/or technical brilliance!

Pilots gathered usually in groups of four with a timer calling the countdown to launch. Hand launching was made at appropriately judged angles, skywards, with a motor run of 25 seconds (called). The sound of synchronised motors stopped and the challenge to be last down or reach the 15 minute duration limit was on. Points were awarded and the next group called out. In the end, everyone should have flown with everyone else, I think! (They all did! Ed.)

Should a model get into difficulties the motor could be restarted but then was judged as having landed. Landing off the patch wasn’t acceptable. It was suggested to me that one chap would win (he’s an aerodynamicist) and I think he did.

Although this event had its informality, it had a more serious side as points were recorded on paper and into a laptop. It's a league. The meeting blended friendly competitiveness with skill and the weather seemed a perfect match. The batteries were 7 cell 2200 mAh from Component-shop and the other specified items came from Robot Birds. Salisbury Club members present were Mike Spencer, Ron Hughes, Paul Higham, Hugh Bainger and Peter Rose (participant).

