

Your Final Glide?

During that superb day during the Cross Country week, I was pushing hard to catch up on the others having made a fundamental error on the way to the first turning point. I had to minimise the time on final glide. Maximise the lift I flew through and minimise the sink, push on to find a seriously good climb, and worry on what side of the high cirrus the lift was likely to be. The Borgelt was alternatively informing me that the glide slope was good, then bad. Affixed to the instrument, thermal sources and cirrus I pushed on.

One fundamental error, the second one! I was not affixed with the bit underneath me should things go wrong. So intense was my concentration on getting back home quick and gaining the previously lost time, I was not looking at my ability to land safely should all go wrong. Remember when there is strong lift there is strong sink and with a mere 600 ft / Min sink rate, at 2500 ft a few K from home you can be on the ground in 4 Min flat. Not much time to make a decision as to where to land. That's 8 k you can fly in 4 Minutes forgetting the circuit. With an 800ft circuit only 2.8 minutes 5 ½ K. and if you are flying over ground say 200 ft higher than the airfield 2 ½ Minutes gives you only 5 K to fly. Now at any time of the year 5 k is not a long way and I have been conservative with a possible sink rate of 6 knots, with a sink rate of 8 then you could only travel 3.5K. Gets frightening doesn't it?

The simple point is. Always look for a paddock even at 5000ft, it just keeps up the good habit. Don't get fixated by the final glide otherwise it may be your final glide.

James Cooper