

100 YEARS OF MODERN GLIDING

HIGH up in the Rhön Mountains lies what is universally considered the birthplace of modern gliding, writes **VGC secretary Bruce Stephenson**. Famous for its world-class gliding museum and historic buildings, the ambiance of the Wasserkuppe is symbolised for many by the form of a renowned large bronze eagle, which epitomises the lost youth of Germany's young fliers, their voices silenced to our world forever.

The Wasserkuppe was first chosen as a gliding site after two Darmstadt high school students, Hans Gutermuth and Berthold Fischer, set out to locate a suitable site to conduct their flying activities in 1911. This marked the start of the most prolific period in our sports history. However, with the advent of the First World War, further experimentation was brought to a premature end and, with the restrictions of the Versailles treaty after Germany's capitulation, the sport of gliding was changed in a way that few could have imagined.

From the highly successful first post-war meeting in 1920 that was to see Oscar Ursinus first stamp his name in the annals of our sport, to the first World Championship in 1937, the Wasserkuppe was to remain at the forefront of an era of our sport's history that will never be repeated.

But the world will again gather on these hallowed slopes in 2011 on the centenary of the Wasserkuppe and, arguably, the centenary of modern gliding. This time it will be to celebrate the 4th FAI International



A K-21 passes the bronze eagle at the Wasserkuppe (Harald Joerges)

Gliding Commission (IGC) Sailplane Grand Prix Final.

In support of the much-respected FAI Grand Prix series, and the four clubs that operate at the Wasserkuppe under the Gesellschaft zur Förderung des Segelfluges auf der Wasserkuppe, the VGC is proud to be part of this significant event marking 100 years of modern gliding.

With the fun due to start on 23 July, 2011, the event represents the culmination of a 10-round qualifying series of races. It is appropriate that the VGC plays an important part in this significant event, alongside the centenary celebrations, representing the spirit and historic development of gliding. A number of individuals from the VGC, and their cherished historic machines, will be

REPRESENTING THE SPIRIT AND HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF GLIDING



involved. Coordinated by Ulf Ewert, from

the VGC's German group, invitations have been sent out to all VGC members. A limited selection of gliders will then be chosen to mark significant historic milestones in the development of the sport. It is anticipated that the event will attract a lot of media coverage and, for the VGC, marks a unique opportunity.

The Wasserkuppe's world-class dedicated gliding museum is unique in charting our sports history from Lilienthal through to the modern day glass-fibre era. Why not take part in this opportunity to remember our sport's first century, and visit the Wasserkuppe between 23-31 July, 2011.

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