



Is our soaring weather getting worse at Lasham?

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It's a common thing to hear said that "such and such" was always better in the past! Almost part of British psyche! However, what about the soaring weather at Lasham, is there any evidence to support that it's been slowly and surely deteriorating in recent times? Now over the years I've flown a lot of competitions at Lasham. I always used to reckon that if you got 5 comp days out of 9 it was an OK comp. Alright you didn't expect them all to be 1000 point days, and you'd more than likely have land outs. 6 comp days a very reasonable comp, 7 days good, etc. These days I get the feeling that if you offered a 5 day comp to Lasham competitors before the comp (impossible I know) the majority would bite your hand off! Have things changed, if so where's the justification if any?

So I decided I'd do a bit of investigation into this topic of "Lasham soaring weather" and this article is the result. All sorts of metrics you can use if you have the needed stats available, but I decided to keep things as simple as possible with the key requirement that results were as genuinely comparable as possible.

- Lasham competitions are a good measuring stick.
- The first comps held at Lasham were the 1955 Nationals, the first Regionals held here were in 1967 by the way.
- There's a number of different ways of assessing how successful a comp was dependent on what stats you have covering it. I decided it would be far and away the best to follow the KISS principle and the one thing you can easily find about every comp is how many scoring days there were and how many points the winner ended up with.
- So a 9 day comp and if every day's well forecast with an appropriate task set there's 9000 points up for grabs. What percentage of that did the winner get?
- 9 days comps with 9000 points awarded overall are as rare as hen's teeth in the UK! In fact there's only ever been one at Lasham - in 1995. In more normal times days get scrubbed and frequently days get devalued, and this all gives a direct insight into how good the comp was from the competing pilots' perspective.
- So it's a 9 day comp and our winner scores 3800 points. That's 42.2% of the points theoretically available. Let's say it was a 2 class comp and the winner of the other class had 52.2% of the maximum possible points available. That gives an average of 47.2% for the comp.
- 2 comps in a year with 5 classes? OK we average the % scores for each winner.
- Out of this we get a graph, the X-axis is the year (OK, a very few years not included as no comps were held at Lasham that year), the Y-axis is the average % for the winners across all of the comps/classes.

GLIDING HERITAGE CENTRE



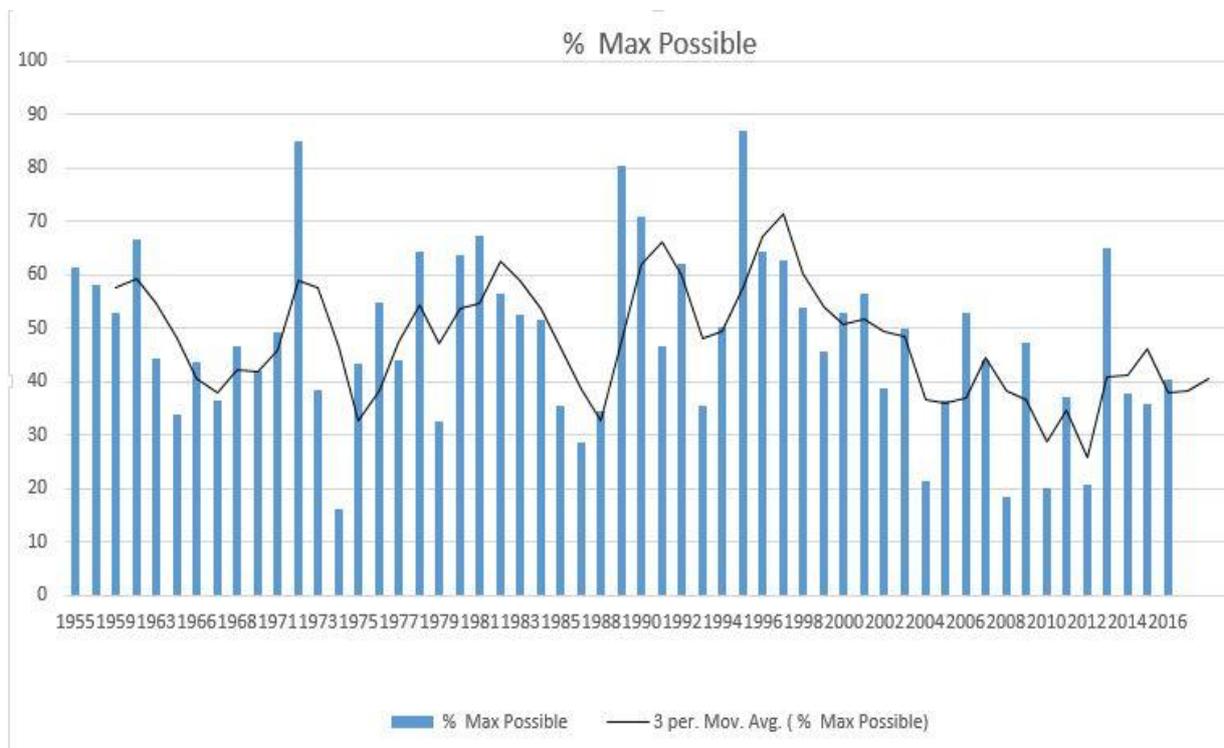
- Finally to smooth it we take a 3 period moving average and add this to the chart.

Note competition scoring methodology has seen changes over the years. From 1961 maximum winner's points per day were changed to 1000, before this 100. In the 1955 and 1957 Nationals they had the weird rule that the score for a pilot's worst day was discarded. In the 1971 and 1972 Regionals they experimented with the "Placements" method of scoring. All of this I have adjusted for so we're looking at as level a playing field as possible.

There are a small number of holes, surprisingly small given that we're covering just over 60 years-worth of competitions. What's currently missing is:-

- **1970 Regionals**, both Sailplane & Gliding and Rising Air advertised one as running between 25th July and 2nd August, but so far I haven't been able to turn up any results.
- (1986?). The International Vintage Rally was held at Lasham in August but I can't find any records of comps. So I'm taking it that none were run that year.
- The competitions are just the BGA rated ones. We had a "Grand Prix", maybe 2, which haven't been included. Also not included is the one Competition Enterprise held at Lasham in 2010.

The database covers 70 competition events starting with the first Lasham comps in 1955 and finishing bang up-to-date with this August's comps. Together these have hosted 72 Nationals comps (Open, Standard, 15M, 18M, Sport, Club, Juniors, 20M 2 seater) and 81 Regional classes. As per the above there's one missing comp (1970 Regionals which was almost certainly single Class).



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What can we glean from the above chart:-

- Starting from 1996 there was a marked deterioration through to 2012, things have improved since then very much helped by 2013.
- 4 out of 5 of the worst years ever have occurred since 2004.
- Since 2004 the best year (2013) is the 7th best of all years.

So, Yes, I think we can say since the mid 1990's we've been on a downward path re "comp enjoyability" though things now look to have stabilised.

- The best overall year 1995, which incredibly saw the Open Nationals and the Class A and B Regionals each achieve nine 1000 point contest days. The contest director, Terry Joint, and the task setter, Roy Pentecost, achieved immortality! The average of the % maximum possible for the three comps, 87. The next best year 1972 when the single class Regionals achieved 85.1% of maximum.
- The best single comp ever? The 1995 Opens where the winner scored an amazing 94.3% of the 9000 maximum. The worst overall year? 1974 where the Regionals had 3 days with 16.1% of maximum.
- Next 2008 where 2 separate comps with 2 classes each managed an average of 18.6%.
- And the worst single comp ever? Sadly this year's Blue Class May/June Regionals which managed just a single day giving 5.4% of maximum, closely followed by the Amber Class with 6%. Yuck!

If anyone would like the master spreadsheet with all the data then please contact me at

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This is the article that appeared in the October 2016 edition of "Lasham Rising Air". It actually now corrects a mistake in that article which said it didn't include the results for the 1998 Regionals – in fact they were included. The only missing result since the start of competition flying at Lasham in 1955 is that for the 1970 Regionals, which was a single class comp. Anyone who has information on that competition please contact the writer!

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