

# Euroglide 2006

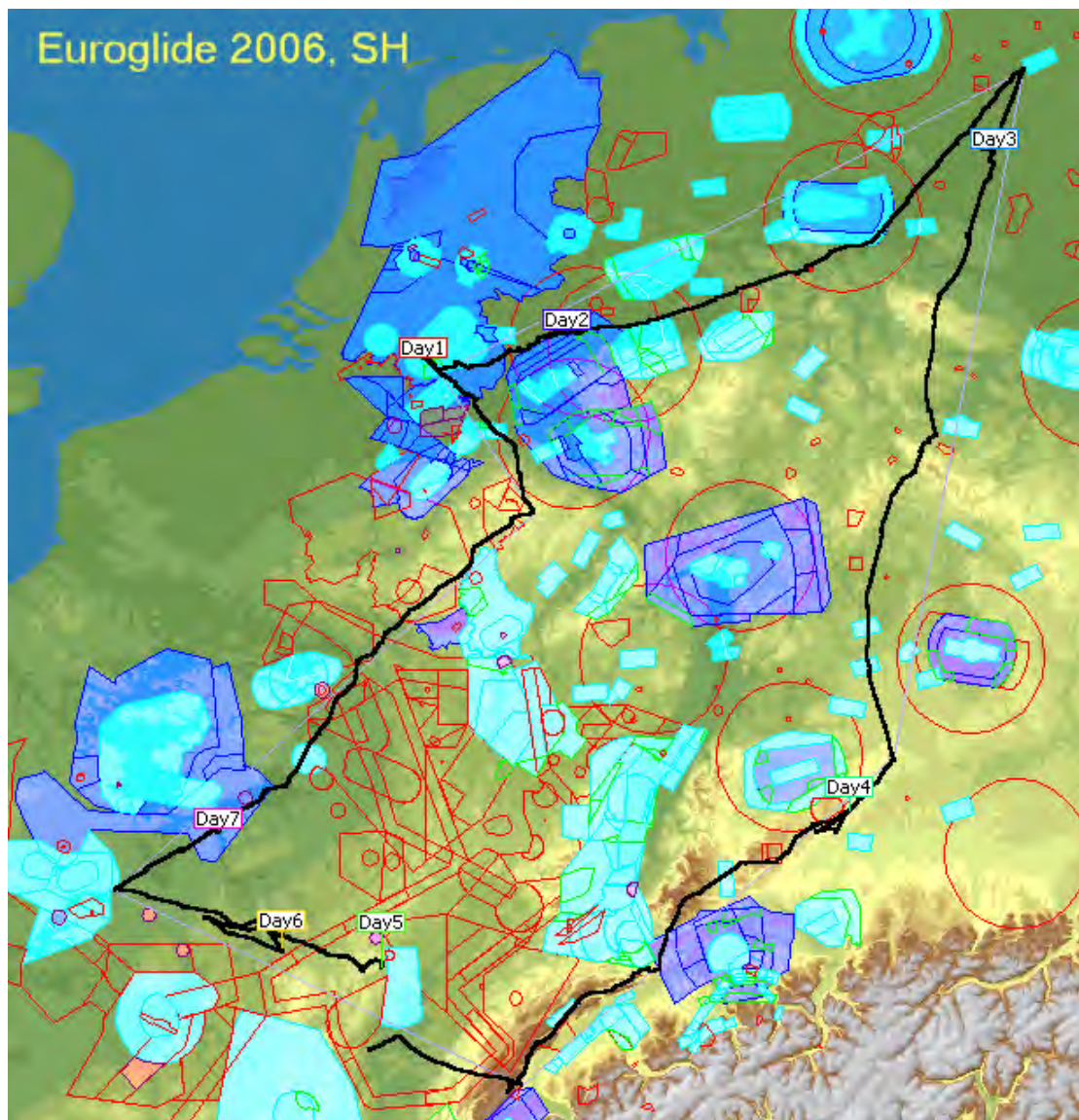
## Diary for SH, Rory O'Connor

June 12<sup>th</sup> – June 24<sup>th</sup>



[www.euroglide.nl](http://www.euroglide.nl)

Map showing route followed and airspace:



## **Euroglide 2006 Diary SH**

Euroglide is a biannual glider race round a 2000km course starting at Eindhoven. This was my first experience of both Euroglide and flying on the continent. I fly a self-launching DG800B 18m.

For further details see the website [www.euroglide.nl](http://www.euroglide.nl)

### **Day 0 – Sun 11-June-06 Eindhoven**



*The crew learn how to navigate.*

We arrived in Rotterdam at 08:00 after an overnight, moonlit ferry from Hull. By 11:00 we were negotiating the military police at the entrance to Eindhoven airfield. The day was hot and blue, and the winch was operating. We rigged and headed for the launch point. On the first launch, I pulled back and the weak link broke at 200 feet. It was pleasant to fly from an airfield with so much room to land ahead. After another two short winch launches, when I failed to stay airbourne, we rolled up to the launch point for a fourth attempt. The launch marshal pointed out the club rule of only three winch launches, but relented so this time I stayed airbourne for a couple of hours, flying over Eindhoven and checking out the continental airspace, airport and waypoint files which I had spent many hours compiling over the previous winter.



*Lots of orange-clad Dutchmen in the stadium at Eindhoven.*

In the evening, the briefing rapidly degenerated into Dutch. At one point all the Dutch started raising their hands, we did not and had unfortunately missed the key transaction “what food did we want to eat?” Luckily our hosts had realised our lack of comprehension.

**Day 1 – Mon 12-Jun-06, Eindhoven to Dinslaken, 97km, 2hr 23min.**

Morning briefing – hot and blue, and a clockwise route, contrary to all my preparations. I tanked up with water and parked the glider near the back of the start grid. One of the seasoned competitors asked me whether I was planning to head north of Hannover through the lowland marshes of northern Holland or through the drier hills south of Hannover. Having always planned to fly north of Hannover, I then spent several hours planning a new route to the south.

The sniffer launched at 12:30 and soon after the grid started to launch in a rather desultory fashion. Finally at 14:20 I was aerotowed into the blue. By the time I reached the edge of the CTR, everyone seemed to have disappeared in gaggles, so I headed slowly east in a clear sky. It did not help that there was an appalling racket coming either from my ailerons or my undercarriage doors. Not long after Venlo, I was scratching my way forward at 1000 feet, but then the Rhine came in sight. I was low but I crossed towards a large power station. Unfortunately, by the time I reached it, I was looking up at the cooling towers and had to motor to Dinslaken.



*Crossing the Rhine. Blue and hot.*

**Day 2 – Tues 13-Jun-06, Dinslaken via Neustadt Glewe to Salzwedel, 451km, 6hr 19min**

As I toured the airfield in the early morning, I came across some tents and glider trailer with a Euroglide sticker and English number plate. As I returned at a more sociable hour, the English team, JF, sent out their best German speaker to greet the official who was purposefully striding towards their encampment. They were relieved to find it was only me. After I had spent some time knotting up the perished bungees on the undercarriage, I visited the tower where I was able to access the internet to find that the opposition had stole a march on me and were 50-100km ahead at Osnabruck. With Nick Heriz-Smith, I reviewed the tephigrams on Meteoblue and decided it was time to launch.

I headed back to the Rhine power station for an industrial thermal to 3000 feet and then headed east to Marl where another power station gave me a 6kt lift to 5500 feet. I charged off north of Dortmund and Paderborn to the Teutoburger Wald hills where some more height was needed. By 15:00 I had passed Hildesheim and was heading northeast towards the turn. As I reached the river Elbe, I encountered MCT and by Neustadt Glewe I was in contact with 5-6 gliders.

After the turn, I switched off and by 17:30 I was looking at wind turbines from close quarters near Salzwedel, so I landed. The response from my crew on landing was “we have a bit of a problem”. As I phoned in, a glider crossed overhead and I returned to the strip to find three companions: PS, another

DG800, and two gliders. When some crew had arrived we headed in to the town, where my crew finally turned up in a hire car.

They had attempted to overtake a lorry on a downhill stretch of autobahn, and having blocked two carriageways with the subsequent jack-knife, they had left the trailer in one garage and the car in another.



*What happened to my car?*

**Day 3 – Wed 14-Jun-06, Salzwedel via Aalen to Blaubeuren, 523km, 8hr 28min**

It looked like another hot, blue day. Cobra trailers were based at Kassel and would be taking a long weekend's holiday starting Thursday. The gliders had moved on to find an aerotow, so PS relaxed on the ground whilst I launched far too early at 11:00 to find some thermals. After two engine burns, and much close contemplation of the north German plains and forests, it was 11:45 and I announced to PS that I had now climbed to 1300 feet in a 0.5 knot thermal and it was time to go. PS was unimpressed, so I headed off. By 12:15, I was at 7500 feet and cranking up the McCready. Soon I was climbing with other Eurogliders below a cloud at Helmstedt, looking at a large blue gap over towards the Harz mountains. The others didn't seem to be in any hurry to leave, so I set off on a 35km glide to the foothills where I climbed up to 8000 feet, a suitable height for a crossing.

After the Harz mountains, there was an even longer 50km blue gap to the Thuringer Wald hills. I was now down to 2500 feet and the TV mast at 3400 feet towered above me. I edged forward from Gotha in weak thermals, until I was able to take a 5 knot thermal up above 8000 feet again. As I headed south over the top of some class D west of Nurnberg, I realised that I would

need to race to keep ahead of the encroaching high cover to the west. By 17:30, I was starting to struggle in weak blue thermals, 60km north of Aalen. However, it was too early to stop and at Aalen at 18:15, I managed another 3kt thermal back up to 7000 feet.

I flew on over Blaubeuren which looked inviting, to a small strip Schlechtenfeld, where I had to start the engine. I decided not to land here as there was a tiny sloping, deserted strip in the trees with a hill at one end and trees at the other. After checking out Hayingen, which was only marginally more promising I flew back to Blaubeuren, where I found I was one of five Eurogliders: DM, M3, MA, NR, SH. Soon I was enjoying lemon beer and weisebeer in the club house whilst we waited for the crews.



*Eurogliders start to arrive at Blaubeuren.*

About twenty of us sat down to dinner under the awning in the picturesque town, 1000 feet down in the valley below the airfield. I enjoyed the local delicacy, whatever it was, my German was not up to the translation. As we left, the town started to resound with cheering – Germany 1 – Poland 0. My crew were camping at Kassel near the Cobra workshop, so I was forced to accept a most comfortable bed from my gliding hosts. On the web, we could see that the front runners had already reached Montricher, and that there was a significant bunch 50 km ahead of us near Stuttgart.

#### **Day 4 – Thurs 15-Jun-06, Blaubeuren via Montricher to Chalons Champforgeuil, 404km, 6hr 44min**

The day started with a fabulous breakfast on the veranda, with a view across the flower-filled Alpine meadow. For countryside, views and ambience, the Schwabisch Alps at Blaubeuren take a lot of beating. My gallant crew had set off in the early morning, and they arrived in time for me to refuel and plan a set of routes. There was a small corridor with a ceiling of FL55 above hills up to 2000 feet on the German-Swiss border. South to Montricher, there were three routes: west over the Jura, east of all the controlled airspace, through the foothills of the Alps, or direct alongside the Lakes through all the controlled airspace.

I was keen to get off and make progress as I was aiming for France by nightfall. As soon as I was airborne, I motored forward round EDR130 and used a little credit before finding a thermal at 4000 feet, only 1500 feet above the heavily wooded hills. I made slow progress following the clouds along the ridges until I was on glide for Hutten Hotzenwald at the start of the corridor. I was now at 8000 feet but the hills below were up above 4000 feet. When I reached the corridor, I found that I was too high, having failed to account for my reserve height. However, I crept underneath the airspace and headed across the Rhine at Bad Sackingen into Switzerland.

By the time, I reached the foothills of the Jura, I was down to 4000 feet, only 1000 feet above the ground, and not very friendly ground at that. Now my previous summer's sessions with Jacques Noel at La Motte du Caire came into play. I was constantly aware of my escape routes and which valley to head down to the nearest strip if it all went wrong. I gingerly edged up the northern ridge until I finally found a climb from only 600 foot above the hill.



*Precipitous thermal sources.*

The Jura sprouted gliders which all seemed to want to travel along the same ridges in opposite directions. So a lot of look-out as I zigzagged along the ridges towards Mont Cornu, with some stunning climbs above precipitous cirques. At les Pont de Martel, opposite Lake Neuchatel, I found a climb which at 9000 feet developed into a 6kt roller coaster up the side of a cloud to 12,000 feet. With the top of the Vallorbe glider sector at FL95, I had to speed up to waste the height.





*Looking across Lake Geneva.*

5 km from Montricher, at 8000 feet, I left the ridge and rounded the turn. 17:00 and I was back on the ridge at 6800 feet, the view towards France did not look appetising. It was still 25km to the other side of the Jura, with ridges up to 4500 feet. I headed south along the ridge. 10km on and I had lost 1500 feet with no sign of lift. I decided to fly the sunny side of the ridge over the woods above Lake Joux, unfortunately Montricher was the other side of the ridge. At 5000 feet, taking pictures of the ridge now 500 feet above me, I encountered a small thermal and with plenty of speed, I crawled back up to ridge height and then to 9000 feet. Without a backward glance, I was off towards France at best glide. One hour later, after a 100km glide, the ground was sufficiently close for an engine burn and displacement 20km to Chalons Champforgeuil.



*Shouldn't I be on top of or the other side of that ridge?*

Soon I was joined by another euroglider RW, an ASH 25M. We headed off with a local pilot for a beer, after a quick text to my crew. "Gone for beer. Back soon.". My crew had been successfully receiving my in-flight texts, and with a ten page list of waypoints, Garmin 3+, computer with Garmin Roads and Recreation, and road atlas, they had been able to both follow progress and navigate to the most off-the-track spot. However, the French messaging service now decided to delay our texts for anything between one and six hours. I refused the offer of supper and headed back to the airfield to find that my crew had been and gone off for supper without me.



*Now landing at Chalons Champforgeuil (on the grass).*

**Day 5 – Fri 16-Jun-06, Dijon Darois to Avallon, 68km, 3hr 25min.**

The day started badly with an early wake-up call because my crew did not want the controllers to find our tent pitched on the airfield. RW had access to the internet via GPRS mobile. The leaders were 200 km ahead at Orleans, and there was rubbish weather, but it looked slightly better to the north. They used a very impressive weather program PC-Met which currently only covers the continent.

I decided to steal a lead and after a harangue from the controller for using my car to tow the glider around the airfield, I set off at 11:00 to motor 60km underneath LFR8B, base 3000ft to Dijon Darois. I reached Dijon to find another six eurogliders gridding up for an aerotow. It was 12:10 and not looking promising, so I launched and headed off, 10 minutes later I was back at the end of the runway at 400 ft AAL when I encountered a weak thermal. The company watched as I climbed to 1200 ft AAL and set off again. 40 minutes and 25 km later, I had run out of options. I used the motor to extract myself from low in the valleys and headed back to Dijon.

Here the grid were about to launch, I munched my lunch whilst waiting for my crew to arrive with fuel. At 15:00, I followed the last of the grid into the air, ready to hop forward from glider to glider. The first glider I encountered was not making much progress. The second was high above me, but was heading back towards Dijon with its engine on. I soon had to use the engine, but continued on course. I only made 30km to Semur, not enough for a contest, before I was low again. Semur looked inviting with a picturesque town and another glider on the ground. However it was only 16:00 so I decided to give it one more go.



*Semur looks inviting.*

After an engine burn, I headed off across LFR45. One of the other pilots at Dijon had listened to the NOTAMs and informed me that the French had stopped flying at 14:00, but I was anxious to avoid a Mirage jet flying at 600 knots. I managed to climb to nearly 2000 ft agl before heading across the centreline to another climb still in the danger zone. I tiptoed on, rarely reaching 2000 ft agl until I finally had to use the engine again after achieving a short contest flight. The displacement across Dijon had cost me nearly 80 km.

I flew first to the airfield at Cravant which appeared to be non-existent and then to Avallon. Here as I was on short finals, I encountered a small plane aborting its landing from the opposite direction. As I pulled my glider off the strip, the French plane returned and landed again downwind. I walked over to discuss with the two pilots their reasons for landing, twice, with a 10 knot tailwind and pointed to the streaming windsock alongside their plane. Their excuse was that they did not know which way the wind was blowing.



*Which way is the wind blowing?*

**Day 6 – Sat 17-Jun-06, Avallon via Orlean St Denis to Pont-sur-Yonne, 160km, 5hr 37 min.**

Another unpromising day. I motored to the previous finish point and started again. Unfortunately 30 minutes later and only 33km further on, I had to restart the engine and return to the start. At 12:30, I restarted and two hours later, after rarely exceeding 2000 feet, I turned Orleans 100km ahead. Now I was faced with a 10 knot head wind and weak blue thermals. I managed a further two steps forward, one step back for 60km before starting the engine at Nemours.



*A nice little pad near the Loire.*

It was only 15:45 so I took a short climb and tried for a second contest flight. I only managed 45km, needing 50km for a valid flight so I headed back to Pont-sur-Yonne. This was a hive of activity. I did not fancy landing on the main runway, because it was hot and a long walk to the clubhouse, so after meandering around I land on a short thin into-wind strip next to the hangars. The French looked slightly askance, but did not comment. I found out that another Euroglider had made the same decision the previous day. It was just a taxiway. Whilst I enjoyed a cold beer, the Eurogliders started to arrive, and by the end of the evening there were 10 teams on site: BG, DM, DV, LL, MA, NL, RW, SH, YA and 41.



*The French approach to hangar packing.*

Several had spent the night back at Dijon Darois after an abortive flight the previous day. There they had watched a French ultralight land downwind and bury its propeller in the tarmac.



*Eurogliders massing at the end of day six.*

**Day 7 – Sun 18-Jun-06, Pont-sur-Yonne via Dahlemer Binz to Eindhoven, 474km, 7hr 47min.**

We all sat down to a communal French breakfast, marred only by the limited arithmetic skills of the French madame. The weather looked promising, plenty of clouds to hide from the sun beneath, and possible Cumulonimbi further on track. Being a Sunday, almost all the multiple French military restricted zones en-route were not in use. The detailed AIP printout of revelant airspace provided by the Euroglide organisation was very useful. However on contacting Semmerzake ATCC to determine the status of EBTRA South, it rapidly became apparent that, unless we learnt Walloon, the only response would be a heavily accented “Nein”.

By the time I had completed my planning and towed to the launch point, the others were already starting to launch, earlier than usual. I set off at 11:45 and headed south of the prohibited area around the attractive (to glider pilots) power station at Nogent-sur-Seine. The lift was not great and I headed eastwards over Chalons Vatry never getting over 3000 feet. I started to head through the complex of restricted airspace. The ground was festooned with signs of military activity. At Suippes I looked down from my thermal to see three tanks dug in below, and another four tanks parked up nearby. I tried to ensure that I thermalled directly overhead. I managed to check the status of one area using the automated response service.



*I wonder what makes all those lines?*



*Ooohs. They have all got guns.*

After crossing LFR45N without mishap, I approached the Belgium border at Sedan. Here the ground started to rise and I had to climb higher. The Ardennes was heavily forested with deep incised valleys. Euroglider 41 sped past as we zigzagged northeast, wary of the growing Cumulonimbi and the increasing gaps between the climbs. By the time I reached Dahlemer Binz at 17:00, the ground was up to 2000 feet and the thermals reaching 6000 feet.





*Maybe the Ardennes are not suitable for a land-out.*

On the final leg, the way northwest was barred by the Cumulonimbi which were encroaching from the west. I managed to head north to Aachen power station where I climbed to 6000 feet before heading off into a flat, cloudless sky at 18:00 with 90km to go and still 2000ft below glide. I scanned the map and identified another power station 45 km ahead on the river Maar near Roermond. This power station only resulted in 500 ft gain. Still 48km to go, down to 2500 ft and the time now 18:40. I crept northwest, and at Weert at 19:00 I was rewarded with a 1 knot climb from 1200 ft back up to 2700 feet. Now on final glide, all I had to negotiate was a transit though Eindhoven CTR below the standard glider sector.



*Roermond power station fails to provide a final thermal.*

I landed at 19:33 to find that the winner had landed at 16:00 and a total of 15 eurogliders had landed that afternoon. Almost all had used their engines on the final leg. Time for a few beers.

### **Postscript**

The next day we drove 180 miles to Kassel where the mended trailer awaited us. Dirk managed to sell me some shock absorbers and wax as it was obvious that I had not cleaned the trailer for several years. The return journey was through thunder, lightning and torrential downpours. We loaded up the glider and managed to get back to Rotterdam for the evening ferry with 15 minutes to spare. After delivering the trailer and glider to Rufforth, we watched the remaining competitors slowly push through the weather to the finish, via the internet.

A further 18 gliders completed the course over the next week and another 7 teams retired.

With many thanks to my father and cousin who crewed for me, and to the Euroglide organisers.

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