OSTIV will probably be an unfamiliar acronym to most glider pilots, especially as it stands for Organisation Scientifique et Technique du Vol à Voile. In plain English, the International Scientific and Technical Organisation for Soaring Flight.

Early glider pilots were not only fascinated with the idea of flying without an engine; they also wanted to understand how the weather worked and how to improve their aircraft.

With these goals in mind, specified as "exchanging experience and friendly cooperation among the specialists and pilots of all nations engaged in soaring", the first international soaring organization, ISTUS, (Internationale Studienkommission für den motorlosen Flug) was formed in 1930.

OSTIV is the post-war successor to this organisation, with the additional goal of "the furtherance of the technical development of soaring by the sharing of experience by glider manufacturers and glider pilots".

The Board of OSTIV includes some names which will be familiar to glider pilots: Mark Maughmer of winglet design fame, Judah Milgram, translator of the German text "Fundamentals of Sailplane Design", along with others from Canada, the US, Germany, Turkey etc.

OSTIV Congresses, the gatherings where papers are presented and ideas shared, represent the opportunity to hear some of the leading thinkers in the soaring world expound their views.

My own experience of OSTIV started with the World Championships in Omarama in 1995, where I had the pleasure of meeting Gerhard Waibel, famed designer of Schleicher gliders from the ASW12 to the ASW28 (with the 'W' showing that he designed it for Schleicher). I've now been given the opportunity to join the Training and Safety as the Australasian representative.

If you have an interest in understanding more about gliding and would like the chance to rub shoulders, listen to and meet some of the leading thinkers in gliding, make the effort to come to Benalla or – if you're going to be there anyway – come on over and listen.

For more information, visit http://ostiv.org