

Cabletalk

March 2010

Welcome to the Spring edition of Cabletalk, the Surrey Hills Gliding Club magazine.

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And much, much more.



New Workshop Arrives



Two new cabins arrived mid February and are being combined to form our new glider workshop

Surrey Hills Gliding Club Team

Club Chairman—Adrian Hewlett

Secretary—Marc Corrance

Treasurer—Ed Brown

Membership Secretary—Russell King

Safety Officer—Michael Pointon

Club Instructor—Steve Codd

Chief Flying Instructor—Richard Fitch

Equipment—Steve Skinner

Cabletalk Editor — Richard Fitch

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Comments on this newsletter and any contributions and photographs are welcomed and should be sent to the "Cabletalk Editor" at the club.

My Club

By Mike Randles

I joined the Surrey Hills Gliding Club in February 1994. This came about after a social evening chatting to Geoff Bloomer, a neighbour, and (now former) member. He mentioned the gliding club and suggested that I came along.

I had been retired for about 6 months from British Airways so this seemed a very good idea to give me a break from DIY and get involved with aircraft again, with plenty of fresh air and physical activity as a bonus. My log book reminds me that my first flights were with Peter Poole and Steve Dawes. The weather was very cold and I soon learned to dress warmly and keep busy.

A year and a bit later I well remember Steve Dawes (former CFI) climbing out of K7 EFD and saying "You're on your own now". He fastened the rear harness, hooked me on to the cable and I was on my way and SOLO. My memory of that flight is sketchy, it was nice bright placid day and I remember talking to myself round the circuit, every control movement, speed and altitude check, positioning for landing and then I was down. My first solo was just 4 minutes but began a most enjoyable fourteen years experience of being in the air on my own and free, within the prescribed limits, to roam the local skies around

Kenley. In between joining the club and going solo there were, of course, the other training experiences of "too low", "too fast", "out of position", "are you keeping a good lookout", and the inevitable "I have control" from the back seat.

On the positive side there was plenty of encouragement and the feeling that progress was being made, albeit slowly. A big plus was the friendly atmosphere of the Club itself,

and that is still very evident. When I am asked by an outsider gliding experience I usually describe it as plenty of fresh air, physical exertion, friendly chat, combined with organising, launching and retrieving gliders, plus an enjoyable flight or two in a glider. My wife will add that, on arriving home, after asking me if I've had a good day and cooking the evening meal, she usually finds me asleep on the settee.

As most of you will know, I've reached the age of 80 which is the normal cut-off point for solo flights, not from the British Gliding Association rules which don't mention a specific age (as far as I know) but from the



K7 Glider

Club's insurance provider. Whether there can be exceptions made is still under investigation. I can still glide as P2 of course and will come along as usual and see how I get on

I have tried to think of ways of describing our club and there are several definitions of 'Club' in my dictionary including:-

1. Stout stick, usually with one end thicker than the other.
2. A group or association of people with common aims or interest.
3. An informal word for a friendly society.

I think the last two define our club very well.

Lasham And Back (Part One)

By Russell King



This is a trace showing the route of Russell's journey

It was one of those days - the forecast the night before hadn't suggested that it was going to be anything special... but then we all know that TV weather forecasts are never right. My regular check of RASP suggested that the thermals would weaken at around 3pm. So not a special forecast, certainly not one which would make you think "I better plan something for tomorrow."

I arrived at the airfield, looking at the Cumulus starting to bubble up. As is normal for a Friday, Dorcas greeted me in the office, asking whether I could look at some problem she was having on the office computer. A while later, I went round to the hangar and pulled my glider out of the hangar and DI'd it as normal, still with no plans for the day. Oh, how that was to change.

I took a launch at midday, and found the first thermal, getting straight to 1900ft. Hmm, this is rather good. I headed towards Kingswood and Reigate Hill, and found myself over the transmitter station there in under fifteen minutes, still at about 1900ft. No, this is not rather good, this is excellent. I better make this day count for something.

So, I turned around and headed back to the airfield, with a slight tail wind, getting there at 1500ft. Need to loose height, I want to get down on the ground and prepare something. Find some sink, ah there you are, let's fly fast in a wide circle. No, Grob, don't come over and join me, I'm not in lift! I'm trying to get down! Once on the ground and retrieved back to the launch point, I mentioned to Steve that I might try something. "Make sure you launch before 2pm" came the reply. So I quickly retreated to the club house; check the notams, check the morning update on RASP, call the NATS 0500 number for temporary airspace upgrades, and plan a task - a 130km out and return to Lasham. Oh, and as it was 1pm, have some lunch... might need the additional ballast, and I'm certain I won't have time to eat anything in flight.

Eventually, at about 1:45, I was back at the launch point with the glider fitted out with logger and iPAQ, and I'd mentioned to Steve my intentions.

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Competition



The answer to the previous competition was, of course, your CFI Richard after going solo last century



Following the success of the last mystery photo competition, I have been given another early picture of one of our current members, this picture was taken on Kenley Common. If you think you know who this intrepid aviator is then contact the editor, there may be another wonderful prize.

Closure Dates 2010

These are the closure dates that we have been given by the ATC.

Thursday 1st April - Sunday 11th April 2010 (Easter)

Friday 28th May - Sunday 6th June 2010 inclusive (Whitsun Bank Holiday/Summer Half Term)

Friday 18th or Friday 25th June 2010

Friday 23rd July - Sunday 1st August inclusive

Friday 20th August - Monday 30th August 2010 inclusive (Bank Holiday)

Friday 22nd October - Sunday 31st Oct 2010 (Autumn Half Term)

Lasham And Back (continued)

I gave my keys to Trevor, who groaned, expecting me to land out, maybe on Epsom Downs again. I launched at 1:59pm, just scraping inside Steve's limit. The day didn't look as good as it had at midday. The first thermal was reasonable, and this time I made sure I went back over the airfield to cross the task start line. (You gain nothing if you don't

start - I'd learnt that lesson at Shobdon in April.)

Looking at the Cumulus, it didn't look as tall or as well defined as it did earlier in the day. Maybe it's not worth going, ending up in a field and needing to be retrieved...

...to be continued

From our Chairman

I have recently received a number of messages from BGA HQ on the subject of safety. The key issues being examined have been accidents on instructional flights and, in particular, flights involving visitors on air-experience flights. When these accidents were examined, nearly all were the result of poor judgement by someone - either before the flight commenced or during the flight.

At Surrey Hills, we have a core of experienced instructors who are well aware of the limitations of gliding at Kenley, whether concerning airspace or the options available for landing out, particularly close to the airfield. As a visitor

from Ringmer recently commented after a site check - "There's a lot of houses!"

But safety involves all of us and we must be constantly aware of potential hazards whether on the ground or in the air. And now that the soaring season is hopefully upon us, one of the skills we rarely get to practise is sharing a thermal! Do you know the rules for safe flying with others? Even if you think you do, it's not a sign of weakness to seek advice and guidance from an experienced instructor - it might just save your life and those of others!

Adrian Hewlett

Safe Winch Initiative

The British Gliding Association (BGA) has been running a 'Safe Winch Launch Initiative' since October 2005. Their web site has some excellent information and computer simulations of what can (and has) gone wrong during winch launches. Please visit

<http://www.gliding.co.uk/bgainfo/safety/safewinchlaunching.htm>

The simulations will give you some idea of how quickly something like a wing drop can develop into a major accident. Winch launch accidents are relatively rare and most pilots will not see an accident. This may be one reason why some glider pilots become complacent.

Please read the booklet called 'Safe Winch Launching' which is available

house. This is essential reading for any solo pilot and will explain to trainee pilots the reasons behind the instruction that they receive.

If you have questions about winch launching or have any concerns please speak to an instructor.



Mike Slatford

I recently asked Mike Slatford if he would like to answer some questions about how he got involved with gliding at Kenley.



What do you remember about your first flight in a glider?

I got two Charity Day flights as a birthday present from my daughters. It was a cold day in May 1991. I chose to fly with Mike Abbott in his K13. Not a long flight but I found it utterly awe inspiring. I thoroughly enjoyed it but felt that flying would be too difficult for me. I changed my mind when I had the second flight and flew it a bit myself. Maybe I was right first time!?

Why did you join Surrey Hills Gliding Club?

It was nearby and I didn't know any better! Now I realise that I couldn't possibly have joined a better club because: a. It's not rich. b. It doesn't have a bar. c. It's full of incredibly nice people (who don't own Porches!). It's "probably the best club in the world".

Who has had the biggest influence on your flying?

My first instructor – the much maligned Chris Ebbs. He was a brilliant pilot. He radiated unbounded energy and enthusiasm. He was an inspired teacher. He let me get on with my progress, gave me confidence, and didn't nag.

What has been your most memorable flight?

I have three, all different, and I can't decide between them.

1. I took off (K8) into what appeared from the ground to be a grey claggy sky. The clag was at 800ft. Above that, the sun was shining on the tops of thin clouds as far as the eye could see in all directions. I could still see through the clouds to the ground if I looked down – absolute magic.

2. I took the last flight of the day in a K8. It was so dark that I laughingly thought I should have brought a torch to read the instruments! The night view was utterly fantastic with the car headlights, and the towns lit up with their different colour street lights – more magic. Yes, I did see the ground when I landed – just!).

3. I took off (K8 again) with rain in the distance, rose rapidly on displaced air, tried to fly round the cloud but got enveloped in absolutely torrential rain, no visibility. I could hardly hear myself think with the noise of the rain clattering on the glider and remember feeling very alone up there. I dived down so that I could just see the ground and felt my way round the field to a perfect landing near the launch caravan in the still pouring rain. First comment – "I wouldn't have missed that for the world".

Have you participated in any other type of flying?

Model aircraft as a boy. Light power aircraft but not as a pilot.

What changes to gliding have you noticed since your first flights?

It's got a lot more bureaucratic – another way of saying less fun.

What would you change if you were the CFI?

Nothing, I'm happy with the way the club is run.

What would you like to change if you were the head of the CAA?

Leave gliding to look after itself.

What is your favourite film?

Haven't got one. Used to be Fantasia.

Does your wife think gliding is the best thing since sliced bread?

Probably not, but it gives her a day of peace from time to time. Seriously, she likes the fact that I enjoy it and likes the social side for both of us.

Introduction to Gliding

By Bryan Yates

Reading Mike Randle's reminisces in January's Cable Talk prompted me to approach the editor regarding a similar introduction to Gliding.

As Mike said, in the forties and fifties "times were 'ard" and the ATC gliding course was much sought after. If I remember correctly, I was only the third or fourth cadet of 74 Squadron to be fortunate enough to find myself on the train trundling down to Folkestone on Saturday 2nd November 1957, soon after my 17th birthday. As I was the only flight sergeant in the party of about a dozen, I was put in charge, a totally different experience when dealing with a group with whom I'd had no previous contact but we were soon in the truck sent to collect us, and on our way up to RAF Hawkinge.

The course was for a full week and we all expected to be flying that afternoon.

Unfortunately, gale force winds were blowing and continued to blow in from the Channel for the next three days. The full time RAF staff kept us busy with tuition on ground handling and procedures to be followed. I can't remember any lessons in airmanship, theory of flight or meteorology. One thing I do remember is the raven haired WAAF Flight Officer in charge of the airman's mess who, unlike the ordinary WAAFs, wore high heeled shoes and even to my inexperienced youthful eye, was a real corker.

In the evenings we went into Folkestone and I can remember on one occasion, foolishly, being less than complementary about the kilts worn by a group of Scottish National Service men, not much older than us. Fortunately our bus back to camp arrived just in the nick of time before the enraged Scotties could get across the road and remonstrate!!

On the evening of November 5th the RAF laid on a massive bonfire with fireworks for the local children and we were invited to join the fun. The fireworks included lots of Very lights of various colours. The children had a marvellous time. Hot Dogs and hamburgers together with sweets were distributed

The next day, Wednesday, the wind dropped in the afternoon and at last we got to go gliding. On that first afternoon I had twelve launches in the Sedburgh (T21).

On Thursday it was into the Cadet for another four launches and then on Friday eleven more including three check flights with simulated cable breaks and finally three solo circuits.

And that was the end of it. The course was very much like a sausage machine and we were put through as if by numbers. There was no expectation

of soaring and the circuits were all very rigid. You pulled off the cable at a thousand feet turned left to the edge of the airfield turned left again until you got level with the launch point turned left and then left again and landed. I think that the airfield was just the right size and the gliding angle of the Cadets such, that if you made the turns at the right time you were almost guaranteed to be at the right height to make the landing.

If I remember rightly, the pre-flight check mnemonic was "cistrs" controls, instruments, straps, trim, release, spoilers. How things change.

This week in deepest Kent fostered my delight in powerless flight but my dream of "soaring like the birds" had to be deferred for fifty years until I fortunately found SHGC where with the invaluable help and assistance of Steve and Richard, I eventually realized my dream.



Kenley to Challock

By Ross Charlton

Ross has just been told that he has been given the 1999 Enterprise Award for this flight which he completed in that year. This is his story.

The day was a good one, with pilots reporting lots of lift. That was encouraging and so was Mick Hughes, the instructor in charge: "Go for it", he said, "we'll come and get you". And they did. Not from a field but from Challock, the intended destination.



This was a flight I had wanted to do for some time; Kenley, the only club inside the M25, to Challock in Kent. The straight-line distance is not much, about 65 kms as the crow flies. However a glider is not a crow. Its path is far from straight and this is controlled airspace with international and other airports nearby. The glider was a K8 which is not renowned for its cross-country capabilities.

The height would be limited to 2,500 ft amsl for 39 kms, 3,500 ft amsl for a further 23kms and 5,500 for the last 3 kms. Kenley is at 566 ft. and Challock at 600. The technique would be: take any lift available; near the limit, go as fast as possible while remaining at height; in still air, fly efficiently: and in sink, speed up to

a maximum of about 60 kts. I must always have a field within reach. There was not much wind. I had the quarter-mill, lower airspace, map and no radio.

Immediately after the launch, and having found some lift, I was off on track. The overall plan was to take Mick's advice and not stooge about waiting to see if the sky would go on being kind. The route would take me between the corner of the Special Rules Area (CTA) for Gatwick and a safe distance from Biggin Hill.

Then I would follow the Downs eastwards and, having crossed the gap north of Sevenoaks, follow the ridge to Challock. Navigation would be easy and the slopes might throw up some lift.

The best laid plans of mice and men. Flying east and south over the tops of the Downs, conditions were good. Leaving the home field was exhilarating but then the lift faded, becoming very patchy. A short

flight but a merry one? There were good fields between the M25 and the Downs and I was sizing up a possible landing site when some lift came and restored both my spirits and my height. Soon it was a problem... 70 kts and I could just remain legal.

For a while I was able to follow the energy and stay roughly on track but Sevenoaks was coming up and there were no clouds to the north. There seemed to be lift to the south so, with overflying the town not an option, I followed the A21 south. Next, I must make my way east. Looking down there were not many fields, rather too many woods and what looked like greenhouses. Find some promising clouds? There were none. Firm or fuzzy, none! The sky was pure blue!

Kenley to Challock (cont)

So what about some ground features. At one stage a scrapyard looked good and helped. I struggled on and searched the ground and the map for details that would indicate the 2,500/3,500 border. Finally I reached a position where it intersected the Medway and I could go higher. I found lift shortly after that and experi-

near me and was in lift, marking it for me. I did not see him.

But patience paid off and I gained height, enough to reach the airfield. It had taken 1hr. 55 min. Several people congratulated me, which was kind, and, as promised, Mick and a crew came to collect me.



enced the pure joy of a climb above the old limit. But then lift became scarce.

In sight of my goal, I was low over two landable fields in occasional, weak lift. Up a bit.....down a bit. Planning a landing. Varying my circles, looking for lift. Challock was just over there, behind those trees, at the top of the ridge, but I was too low to see the field, let alone get into it. To the north of Challock there was a glider circling at a good height, so there was lift about. Later a pilot said he had been

You can't glide without favourable atmospheric conditions and, clearly, that day they were good enough for that combination of aircraft and pilot. But if you are flying a club aircraft, it is marvelous to have a can-do, enthusiastic instructor and members who are willing to do without the aircraft, and bring you home.

Ross Charlton 2010

Please send contributions and photographs for the next Cabletalk to the Editor at the SHGC clubhouse.