

Cabletalk

Surrey Hills Gliding Club Newsletter

March 2017

Editor's notes

Thank you to the people who have contributed articles (some under duress and others not!) – without your contributions there would not be a newsletter.

Paul Hayward's *Bronze and Beyond* sessions on the First Monday of each month are regularly attracting between 6 and 8 people and we would like to thank him for his valuable time and guidance.

From the Chairman

Adrian Hewlett

Musing on the New Year – 2017 for those with short-term memory loss – for a reason that my own short-term memory fails to recall, I wondered if 2017 was a Prime Number. For a nano-second, I wondered if my limited mathematical skills could provide the answer,



The picture shows no bums or parachutes, but ice on the wing which stayed all day. The temperature never rose much above freezing all day. It also shows the inversion over London on the day that Brixton exceeded its pollution target for the whole year in just 5 days of 2017.
Photo: Richard Fitch

but common sense prevailed and I cranked up Google on the computer – and yes – 2017 is a prime number!

By a serendipitous connection, I have just finished reading a series of books by Patrick O’Brian about the Royal Navy at the time of the Napoleonic Wars. When a junior rank was asked how he was, the inevitable answer was – “prime sir” – meaning excellent.

So, will 2017 be prime for the Club? Externally, we now appear to be on a better footing with the management side of the Air Cadet movement – unless we get a visit from a senior officer who has no comprehension of the way Kenley – ie City of London, MoD and the Club work as partners – who suggested that all vehicles should be “road legal”. Does

anyone know who can do a MoT test on a golf buggy? The better understanding of the vandalism of the safety barriers (fences to you) and of incursions during operations could well lead to the erection of “permanent” safety barriers and suitable warning signs – query in preparation for a limited return of 615VGS to flying – watch this space.

Elsewhere, the near £1m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to breathe life into the various dilapidated WW2 structures should start to be spent later this year – apparently delayed pending the appointment of an acceptable contractor. The absence of Cadet flying has removed the enforced shutdowns we suffered when 615 were running courses. These gave us some breathing space for “housekeeping”. Two badly



Che Guevara (former Cuban leader) as a young man in Argentina obviously involved in gliding. When visiting the memorial and museum to Che at Santa Clara I spotted the photo. We were warned that taking photo's was totally forbidden but couldn't resist the temptation. I was accosted by the guards but managed to slip the photo to the back of the phone. They had a search but got fed up in the end. Anyone able to identify the glider? Photo: Bryan Yates

needed jobs will be self-evident to regular attendees at the Club – the leaking roof of the clubhouse and the deterioration of the “battle-ship grey” paint on the containers.

Internally, the key issue is the newish regime for training and classification of instructors who are the lifeblood of the Club – without whom we could not train new members nor fly the trial lesson visitors whose purchase of vouchers etc are essential for maintaining the financial security of the Club. A few tweaks to the syllabus for the traditional BI, Ass Cat and Full Cat ratings would be fine – but apparently the BGA does not subscribe to the adage “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” and has plans to throw the baby out with the bathwater – plans, the implementation of which, keep being deferred but without keeping the traditional courses available. (References to baby do not refer to the Grunau Baby!)

Those who read and digested the September 2016 edition of Cabetalk may remember that I stated my decision to step down as Chairman after 10 years in the role, and pass the mantle to younger shoulders (I shall be 75 this year). In those 10 years there have been many changes – including the appointment of a certain Mr Codd as Staff Instructor/Site Manager. As far as I remember, there were 3 private gliders – now I counted 11 trailers last week, whether they contained anything I know not, but at times there now seem to be more members indulging in the renovation of their prized possessions than those flying. The other noticeable change – albeit fairly recently, has been the change in the makeup of the Club’s demographic. I remember two daughters of Club members with us until more important things called. Two years ago, a young lass (with a gliding background) joined – followed by three other ladies over the next year or so. Whether she was a sort of “Pied Piper” I don’t know. The average age has also come down and I hope that we will continue to attract a

wider range of members – despite our “weekdays only” limitations.

But although I intend to step down as Chairman, I am very happy to continue dealing with the non-gliding admin matters for the time being. For example, at present I’m waiting for Croydon Council to respond to my application for 100% Business rates relief as a “Small Business”. So anyone who is less than happy with paper-pushing, need not fear as those tasks don’t form a compulsory part of a Chairman’s duties.

But before anyone gets the idea that I am looking for sympathy, I note from the minutes of the first committee meeting I attended, the names of Richard Fitch, Paul Hayward and Stephen Skinner. Which leads me to use this piece to express my thanks to all the members who have helped me over the last ten years.

Skylarks and Swallows

Shona Fenion

I can stand on the airfield listening to the skylark burble and immediately I’m back on the gliding site where I grew up; my parents met in a glider and I didn’t really have much of a chance to avoid the flying bug. I remember dad asking me, one blue cloudless day when I was about four, if I wanted to go up. I will never forget flying above the clouds with him in the club K2B, looping and whirling while the grit from the floor flew up into the top of the canopy. So when I arrived at Kenley two and a half years ago, I had a feeling I’d seen it all before, and so I had.

Steve is the epitome of my Dad when it comes to flying; grumble first, ask questions later (when Paul coined the phrase ‘small cute and cuddly’ I think he was describing the club . . .). But I’m grateful for this. I feel much safer for having someone around who can yell when yelling is needed, and now I’m solo I am very



The Swallow rigged for the first time in years - Shona has a lot of work to do before it flies but we all like a project! Photo: Chris Leggett

much still reciting Steve's post-mortem of criticism every time I land (I hold on to a vague hope that this will eventually make me fly better).

I've seen more air accidents than I ever wanted to see; I have a Slingsby 'Swallow' glider courtesy of someone who flew an entire circuit with the airbrakes out and landed in the trees which surrounded the site where we used to fly (it's called Falgunzeon and it's a BGA site if you're curious). The pilot walked away from the crash but woke up in the night unable to move and needed vertebrae fused; he'd broken his back. Everyone makes mistakes (myself definitely included!), but carelessness and a lack of regard for safety make me very nervous.

What next? Well, my glider has finally arrived at Kenley, yay, and now needs some serious dusting, as well as a current C of A and a trailer, so not much... I'd also like to sort out

my soaring - going up proves to be challenging so far, and maybe try some more acro (with an instructor!), as well as doing some more reading around gliding in general. One thing's certain though, after twenty years' wait to get back into the silent world, I am not leaving it again any time soon.

Steve's bit

Steve Codd

Ten years ago I came to Kenley for the first time (excluding the fact that I lived here back in the early 70s). I took one look at the place and thought it would do as a stop gap job for a year. Well 10 years later I'm still here. Things have changed a lot, gone are the K7s replaced with the two Grobs, the old winch upgraded. The leaking rotten club house replaced by a

leaking not rotten one!! Hopefully in the very near future we can put together a work party to fix the leaks and clad the outside of the building to up our image.

It's been nearly three years since the Air Cadets stopped flying and keeping the airfield safe for our operations has become more and more difficult, but things are starting to change. Visits from various members of 2FTS have become more and more frequent. I've just finished escorting the safety officer around the airfield (I know he was health and safety because he was dressed in yellow). New but totally inappropriate signs have started to go up around the site, if anyone can find the secrets that you could be prosecuted for, don't inform me as I haven't signed the official secrets act . . . On a serious note we must all be vigilant when it comes to educating the public who wander over the airfield by filling in the form in the log book so the incursions can be passed onto 'the powers that be' to support their next attempt to put a fence (safety barrier) around the airfield. If they don't get the fence it's unlikely they will be able to fly at Kenley again. This won't be good for us. So please do all you can to avoid any incidents and stay vigilant.

We've had some stunning soaring days already this year and with a fleet of five serviceable club gliders; you can all set yourselves some targets for the coming year, be it going solo, bronze, cross country or maybe compete in a competition. To this end I'm trying to get us back into the interclub league, this is a non rated weekend based competition, ideal for an introduction to competitive flying. Watch this space for details.

One of our Grobs 'Oscar' FHO was refinished last year and came back from Poland looking great in a new colour scheme, KFG 'The Colonel' went away for its annual inspection etc and has now returned in the same corporate colours, please look after them -

after you, the members, they are our most valuable assets we have, without them we don't have a club.

A big congratulations to all those who achieved goals in this sport of ours over the last year however big or small and let's spread our wings (safely) over the coming year. Fly safe with a smile.

How it all started

Paul Hayward

In casual conversation I was asked if I could write something along the lines of 'My flying experiences' or 'How it all started' - well I began writing and got side-tracked as you will see . . .

I'm often asked - 'What got you into flying?' Well, indirectly it was a parachute jump!

I was working and living with my family near Coventry in the mid-eighties when I saw a newspaper article asking for people to sign-up for a parachute jump for charity, none of your modern tandem style, but training for a solo static-line jump. All my friends thought I was crazy but that was just what I needed for motivation. I suppose I was looking for some intrepid activity to get me away from the routine of work and family life so I duly blagged family and friends, anyone I could, and raised enough for charity and to qualify for the event. I then spent evenings and weekends for several weeks in a group of



Handsome, Rugged, stupid!
gritted teeth!



IT'S A LONG WALK BACK!



trainees learning how to fall (gracefully) in the local sports-hall and at the jump-club.

Eventually the big day arrived, last minute practice, the tight jump-suit (very fetching) and the harness with parachutes (two), eight of us, plus jump-crew, crammed into an Islander over Nottinghamshire. We had practiced on the floor of the sports hall sitting in each other's laps in a stack of four and shuffling forward on command, perching on a bench one bum cheek on, one cheek in free space, then falling sideways. We later practiced falling out of a more realistic doorway at the club, but the reality was different again because in an Islander you perch on the doorsill then step out of the doorway, one foot onto the wing-strut before letting-go! Oh!

The 'moment of release' can be interpreted many ways, with and without sphincter-related issues. As a virgin jumper no-one knows if you'll actually do it; no-one pushes you; I did see one ad-hoc reshuffle of the jumping order and an intense quiet conversation! You never know until you get to the door with the wind buffeting you, whether you will actually step into the void but step I did – don't think just do it! Oooooo, Bugger!

I still remember that first time. Committed now, falling, I remembered the training – 'One Thousand – Two Thousand – Three Thousand – Check Canopy' ... Thank Christ for that – it's open!

No fumbling for the reserve! The wedding tackle is still intact after the harness wrench, have a look around and rotate with the hand lines to steer in the right direction. Now I can relax and take in the sights above and below. Astounding – floating up there with my arse in a sling – calm and peaceful (like ballooning). Steer a couple of rotations for a look-see and then all too soon the ground comes closer and I need to concentrate on the landing area and avoiding other bodies. Knees together, legs curved, rotate sideways (like side slipping) and ... Smack – Roll – Stop.

Wheeze out a pent-up breath. Scramble up as the parachute develops a second life and tries to pull me over, bundle up and grab the lines, everything clutched to the chest. Look around for other survivors and above for descenders, start walking.

My wife and kids (two) watched and waited with equal amounts of dread and anticipation – my wife said that if the fall didn't kill me she would for making her so anxious, but morbid fascination won the day and she watched with seven other families for us to appear in the sky.

They say that God moves in mysterious ways – but it was the vicar who broke his leg! The landing area was a cornfield, which we all managed to hit. On landing and rolling and tackling the billowing nylon we all strode out of the corn with armfuls of parachute and back to the audience of loved ones. The wives were anxiously trying to identify their own spouse as we each emerged with big grins on our faces until one lady realised her man was missing and the first-aid truck was racing off to the landing area. In the heat of the moment Jane, my wife, was almost excited enough to want to try it for herself but the vicar's fate probably swayed the decision.

Undaunted by the vicar's example I went back on subsequent occasions for more jumps and loved every one of them. Anyone who thinks glider flying is weather dependant has not tried parachuting. It must have been autumn when I began but I remember a success rate of about



one-in-five weekends of possible jump-days with many abortive journeys in the right direction only to have the weather turn foul. I was just getting hooked on the sport despite frustrations when I found an alternative job down south and the subsequent relocation, new house, new job, different routines, kept me occupied for quite some years. When I had my life back under control in the mid-nineties I searched for a Parachute Club and found a Gliding Club instead. Late afternoon at Kenley, last flight of the day, winch launch, wild and windy conditions with no chance on the controls but I loved it and joined the club the next day – I’ve been hooked ever since, but that’s another story.

Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner and awards ceremony was held at the Woodcote Park Golf Club on the 18th February 2017. The event was well attended and gave the opportunity for the members to dress up and thank their partners as well for putting up with the many hours we spend at the club. The annual prize giving was also done, with cups going to (in no particular

order) Shona Fenion, Serena Lambré, Tim Horbury, Bob Sluman and the smallest cup that could be found for Tom Arscott.



Tom making plans for his next competition.
Photo: Chris Leggett

AGM

The club AGM will be held in the Clubhouse on 5th May 2017 at 7:30pm. Please come along and support the committee.

Contact Details

Club Chairman	Adrian Hewlett
Secretary	Marc Corrance
Treasurer	Mark Kidd
Membership	Russell King
Safety Officer	Paul Hayward
Club Instructor	Steve Codd
CFI	Richard Fitch
Equipment	Steve Skinner
Cabletalk Editor	Chris Leggett

You can contact any member of the team through the club at:

The Surrey Hills Gliding Club
Kenley Aerodrome, Victor Beamish Avenue
Caterham
Surrey CR3 5FX
Tel: 020 8763 0091
Web: www.surreyhillsgliding.co.uk
Email: surreyhillsgc@gmail.com

Comments on this newsletter and any contributions or photographs are welcomed and should be sent to the “Cabletalk Editor” at the above email address.