

Cabletalk

Surrey Hills Gliding Club Newsletter

May 2017

Editor's notes

As the weather improves we are starting to get some decent flying days although there are still plenty of windy days that curtail flying. This issue was easy – so much has happened and it just wrote itself – the stories are worth reading though and they show what can be achieved! Congratulations to Tim Horbury on getting his Silver signed off.

It's all in the mind ... and the lap of the god they call ... Meteorology ...

Jonathan Hill

I guess all budding glider pilots dream of owning a slippery ship and flying 300Km whenever the sun shines, well one day maybe, but one of our Pirats would do for now. The softy townies on the telly were moaning about a drop in the temperature as a cold front travelled south over the country during the night of 24th/25th of April and RASP painted a rare picture across SE England, I drew a line on the map from Kenley to Challock and text Steve if I was good to go, he replied 'draw it to Waldershare', he needed the glider there for the weekend!

So with a bottle of water a banana and a few dead fly biscuits and two fleeces on with a borrowed oudie I said farewell to Shona and

departed Kenley in G-DDBV only to be back on the ground six minutes later! 12:18hrs, second go had me thermalling away towards Warlingham in a 10Knt NW breeze and at 1950' I headed SE towards the 3Km wide gap between the Biggin & Gatwick airspace capped with our 2000' ceiling... and this is kind of how it went...

Strong climbs strong sink... that brown field... high key... here we go... pylons... towards low key... push in the bum... one turn only... up or land... second turn up... third turn gently up... umpteenth turn vario off the scale bleeping crazily oudie bleeping warnings Biggin to the left Gatwick to the right class 'A' above... exited thermal nudging 2000' at 70knts in a steeply descending left hand turn towards Sevenoaks... no way am I wasting that energy as the east bound cars on the M26 go backwards below... saw Mark in his LS4 going west... concentrate...

What goes up must come down... 13:20hrs that field towards the escarpment looks flat without power lines... I'd gone 45 deg left to get round the sink but only reduced the indicated sink from 6 to 4 down, much smaller than the last field... hope that green crop isn't too long yet... good to have a second choice field, not much time to survey the patchwork options with the vario nudging 4 and 5 down, don't dither... option one is good enough for me... don't cramp the circuit... don't overshoot that's a concrete barn at the end not a hedge... OK here we go... 1 up... 1 turn only... 1 up... not to slow, not sure I can

recover from a spin from 1200' and get into my chosen field... 1 up... 45Knts... dig that wing in... 2 up... whoomph... off the scale... another high speed exit at 1950' with nose well down Wroughtham mast goes past on my left and thank goodness I was looking down at it.

I deliberately stayed north of track to allow for the forecast 10-12Knt NW breeze and because it made navigation easier... M26 -> M20 and it also kept me away from Headcorn and its freefalling parachutists.

OK I'll be honest, dreaming of a greaser of a landing at Dover over my bowl of porridge earlier that morning I knew the reality was more likely to be sitting in a field counting daisies or that I'd bust airspace left right and centre. What with trying to stay in the sky, having the vario screaming at me, the oudie beeping warnings here, there and occasionally everywhere my track was right up against Gatwick's airspace and combined with the occasional glance at the map to try to work out which yellow blob I was close to... I hadn't realised how far I'd actually made it eastwards albeit north of track... though there seemed to be a distinct lack of 'urbaness' around... must stay below 2000'... must stay below 2000'... I recognise that...

13:28hrs... I did a couple of gliding holidays back in the early nineties there, Challock, sod it I could have gone to 3500' from Maidstone! I'd deliberately left the altimeter on QFE as the North Downs extending east to Folkestone are roughly at Kenley's elevation with the Weald to the south around 300' lower - mental note made, Mk 1 eyeball employed!

So the pros & cons of altitude... Challock disappeared downwards as I wound up to 5500' and brushing cloud base... I needed a 'leak' (old man's problem...)... a sandwich bag and cat litter... this was all Steve Swan's idea... without a pee tube I'd made provisions... a re-sealable good quality sandwich

bag filled with two mug fulls of cat litter... absorbent granules... should work a treat cos Swanny said so... right... open corner of bag... adjust garments... wiggle and writhe... concentrate... finally relief... don't rush... bladder empty... phew that feels better... Hold up sandwich bag... unabsorbent graduals - not!... Humm... ponder... zip up bag... zip comes off in hand... Oh s**t... OK nothing for it... roll up top of bag... and out of the DV panel... sorry farmer Giles... needs must! Freshen up with Johnson's baby wipes (takes me back a bit)... and onward... dear Santa...

Before me lay the whole of the Thames estuary, the North Kent coast, Herne Bay to Margate in the murk met by the South Kent coast from the Dungeness peninsular, Folkestone and my destination Dover, but where in that murk was Channel GC's Waldershare Park airfield?

I've only got 3¹/₂ hrs to kill... Hmmm let's get there first then at least if it all dies I should land at goal. Gliding from one strong thermal to the next between 4 & 5500' had me up between the clouds... good look out maintained and lift in the strangest of places... I wonder how high it went... chilly up here... east of a line between Margate and Hythe controlled airspace goes to FL65, this is the stuff of dreams. Arriving north of Dover first my job was to locate Waldershare, it took me ages. First I identified a nice big brown field near a new development which became my default land out, I couldn't spot the airfield. Eventually I spotted the big house first then the strip amongst all the other fields... phew.

Now drunk on altitude I set the barometric setting to 1013hP and found a nice steady 4Knt thermal just north of Dover... so smooth I could crank DBV to 45 degrees at 45Knts and could actually let go, nibbled a biscuit and glanced at the map whilst wondering what the whitish curtains were below and away to the NE, wrong colour for rain, I kept going up, my

feet had been cold now since I left Challock and despite wearing two fleeces I could feel the cold coming through, but I was at an indicated 6,400' and the oudie was chirping at me!... So off to Folkestone... which was part of the on the hoof plan to find Waldershare again... if you line up Folkestone harbour wall with a big green warehouse north of Dover and extend the line it takes you to Waldershare, could I find the airfield on the return run, working between an indicated 3500 & 6000' I spent ages... it had disappeared into the patchwork, yet my big brown field was always there! In fact three times I went through this agony.

I realised I could do the five hours and altitude equalled duration... I needed a wee again... or was that the cold, 3 degrees per 000' = -8 to -12 degrees... then I'd start shivering which a good fidget stopped... come on Jon, man up you've been cold sailing and up mountains, at least you're dry up here. I glanced down at the channel and the toy ferries plodding to France made me smile at the thought of all that water.

My first 6000+' climb was at 14:03 and the last one was at 16:44hrs... aside of searching for the airfield I went up and down exploring various clouds and lift between clouds, mainly smooth but often quite strong but never actually going anywhere, it did become a test of perseverance and determination to beat the cold... which was making my legs very stiff and co-ordinated turns had to be thought about. With hindsight I should have flown back towards Ashford where the lift probably lasted longer and a glide from 5000' would have got me back to Dover... but could I have found Waldershare... which is why I stayed at Dover... when the sky seemed to die and I could find nothing... but I had Waldershare in sight and so I found myself scratching over a new development 1/2 a mile and at 1200' Kenley QFE from Waldershare finding the odd lump over the warm roofs but after a few turns with stiff legs and feet I hadn't felt for the last three hours I turned for Waldershare completing a reasonable left hand circuit and that greaser of a landing I'd dreamt about over my hot porridge!



Jon safely on the ground after his marathon flight – congratulations Jon.

Steve, sorry for not shutting the airbrakes and putting the strap inside the cockpit . . . but the longest wee I've ever had took precedence! Paul Bolton vey kindly met me; the photograph he took of me was whilst I was shaking like a leaf supported by DBV's wing, cold, adrenalin a combination of both? It took a good hour to subside.

Paul dropped me at Dover Priory station where I celebrated in a very 70s pub with a half of Guinness and then settled on the train to Tonbridge while the sun set. A change at Tonbridge saw me towards Redhill but I should have alighted at Godstone which would have been a shorter retrieve for Steve.

We all have days in our lives we remember and the 25th of April 2017 is certainly one I shan't forget. Thanks to all at SHGC for making this happen. Steve had been saying he wanted to get people cross country from Kenley . . . so who's next?

98Km / 4990' height gain / 4hrs 48 min duration, submitted to the FAI for consideration.

First solo away from home club

Chris Leggett

I took our SZD55 glider all the way to Sutton Bank last year and it stayed in its box because of the weather. The only positive was that I learned how to tow a trailer – I had never towed anything before so this was an education – thanks to Mark Kidd for leading the convoy, I just followed what he did and very quickly got used to having the white box in my rear view mirror.

So the next opportunity was late last year down at Dover when Channel GC got a tug in for the weekend. Compared to driving to Sutton Bank this was an easy run until we got

into Waldershare Park. The track leading to the club in the middle of the park was filled with pot holes and the rain had made everything extremely soft and muddy – but we got it there. The first thing was a site check in the Grob with Steve, nothing particularly uneventful. Then we had an aerotow, again in the Grob, and got to 2000 feet (luxury) – Steve then asked me to find the airfield – did I know where it was – of course not – a real lesson learned – look underneath as well as out and also the angles completely change with the additional height.

So then Steve clears me to fly the SZD55 solo – so drag it to the winch launch point and wait, and wait, and wait – they have wrapped a steel cable around the drum. Then it starts to rain – so let's put the glider away – there is always tomorrow. The next day we arrive at the airfield and flying is cancelled – second trip away and I still have not flown solo in my glider or any glider come to that.

Move forward to the first May Bank holiday weekend in 2017 – another tug in for the long weekend at Dover – or that is what we thought! It ended up without a tug but we were there for the weekend and eventually I was going to get to fly the SZD55 solo from somewhere else other than Kenley.

So the glider and I are ready to go – was Steve going to give me another site check – no, so we move to the launch point. Steve has advised taking the left hand cable as the right



Chris ready for a winch launch at Channel GC.
Photo: Caroline Leggett

one has broken a couple of times. So the time eventually arrives to attach the cable and we are ready. I had already decided that unless there was fantastic lift (no chance) I was just going to reacquaint myself with the surroundings and do a short flight – hopefully we can get a longer flight later. Cable gets taut and we are off – trees on the left are shielding the wind – once you get to the tree top height the wind hits you from the left – not a bad launch and reasonably straight they tell me after, got better height than at Kenley but their cables are longer. Cable releases with a thud, OK let's get attitude right and trim accordingly, undercarriage up.

Do a long lazy turn that way I can look out at all the things Steve pointed out last year – yes it all looks vaguely familiar – there are the Dover docks, there is Waldershare House (you can't miss it), wow look at all those rape fields and there is the airfield – it's longer than Kenley but much narrower – no chance of a cross landing – you have to go in the right way. Steve has warned me about the approach, don't get too close to the trees and make sure the reference point is about a quarter of the way up the strip – otherwise you hit a ridge and can take off again.

So much to think about that just comes naturally at Kenley even after my limited 300 flights. Time to land, enough height, do the diagonal, now the base leg, trees look big but OK. Small amount of brakes until we clear the trees – OK now for the landing itself – all seems so different. More brakes, reference point looks perfect – this is going to be OK, getting lower and lower, round out here – still looks good – hang on a minute getting a bit low – then about 1 second before touching down I realise I had forgotten to put the undercarriage back down. Oh well, they all say there are those that have and those that have not yet – I am now in the former category! Luckily no damage and another couple of

flights without forgetting the undercarriage before the weather ruined the rest of the weekend.

At last solo from somewhere other than Kenley and Channel GC put on a BBQ in the evening – a good weekend.

If Heineken made fields . . .

Andrew Woolley

The SHGC Spring expedition to Shobdon at the end of April comprised me with the Dart, Russell King with his Vega, Richard Fitch and Marc Corrance with the Discus and Philip Skinner and Aya without a glider. We were also joined by ex-SHGC member, Ben Watkins with his ASW20.



Marc Corrance taking an aerotow in the Dart.

Having had great soaring weather in most of April, things turned cold and our expedition weather didn't look too promising. On arrival on Thursday only the Discus was rigged and both Marc and Richard took tows to 2000' and had rain dodging flights of 41 and 47 minutes respectively.

Friday was overcast but at least dry and was just about soarable. After a check flight with Marc in Shobdon's Grob Acro I had a 48 minute flight in the Dart followed immediately by a ridiculously short 9 minute flight in the Discus, where I was narrowly beaten to the ground by the tug. Minus 8 knots down all the

way home! Everyone flew and Richard won the prize for longest flight of the day with 75 minutes in the Discus.



A very wet Monday.

Saturday was still overcast but with less wind and it proved to be surprisingly soarable. Russell managed to get two-thirds of the way to the Mynd before turning back and did a 1 hour 46 minutes flight, which turned out to be the longest flight of the day. I followed him for a bit in the Dart but wasn't quite as bold, landing after just over an hour and a half. At one point I was sharing a thermal with Ben

and Russell, which was fun and I think we all saw each other in the air at some point in the day.

Sunday was also overcast but a strong south easterly wind suggested that the local ridges would be working and they were, so I enjoyed a nice 58 minutes flight in the Dart before rain stopped play in the early afternoon. Russell managed almost two hours, which was the longest flight of the day.

Monday didn't look flyable with heavy rain showers and a strong easterly wind so Ben, Richard and Marc cut their losses and headed home with the later pair kindly taking my Dart home and leaving me with the Discus to play with. After a leisurely start to the day Russell and I headed to the airfield to clean our gliders which had been hurriedly derigged and stowed into their trailers in a wet and filthy state at the close of flying on Sunday. I managed to clean and dry the Discus three times. Each time I had nearly got it dry when a rain storm came through! We decided not to fly at all and were



Discus on the Shobdon grid.



Views of Hay-on-Wye.

then annoyed by Ben who kept posting pictures of stonking skies around Usk on Facebook!

Tuesday dawned with a bright blue sky and instead of heading home Russell and I decided

to attempt a 100km triangle (Shobdon – Glasbury Bridge – Tenbury Wells – Shobdon). This was to be my first cross-country flight so was quite an ambitious task for me. I took off first but had real trouble finding a decent



If Heineken made fields!

thermal, during which time Russell had launched and started the task 30 minutes ahead of me. Anyway, my first leg went well and I rounded the first TP successfully and had a great climb to 3800' as I started the second leg. Then it all went wrong. There were now big gaps between the thermals and the only thermals I found were weak and now I was in a head wind so was going backwards when thermaling. I had to go forward fast to try and find a strong thermal but I never did so suddenly it was time to land out for the first time – something that I had not been looking forward to! Fortunately, I was spoilt for choice and found what looked like a nice empty grassy meadow near Kinnersley. As I got lower I could check for power lines, slopes and other obstructions and it all looked good so I made my decision and went for it. It wasn't too different to landing at Kenley and I held off fully, landed softly and stopped with plenty of room to spare. I got out and looked around and realised just how good this field was. It was closely mown and smooth with an uphill slope. If Heineken made fields this would be one of theirs!

I found the farmer who was very sympathetic and then trudged off down the road to find a mobile signal and then rang Russell, who arrange for Phil and Diana King to bring over my trailer and they then helped me to derig and get back to Shobdon. What an adventure!

AGM

The AGM was held on Friday 5th May in the clubhouse and Adrian gave his final Chairman's Report before standing down from the Committee and not offering himself for re-election. Steve Skinner also stood down but was re-elected. There is now one new face on the committee (Shona Fenion) and one person returning to the committee after a break (Trevor Fielder). With Adrian standing down we currently don't have a Chairman but the committee will elect a new one when it next meets and Adrian has offered ongoing help. Steve Codd made a presentation to Adrian in recognition of his 10 years as Chairman.

Contact Details

Club Chairman	Who knows!
Secretary	Marc Corrance
Treasurer	Mark Kidd
Membership	Russell King
Safety Officer	Paul Hayward
Club Instructor	Steve Codd
CFI	Richard Fitch
Equipment	Steve Skinner
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Comments on this newsletter and any contributions or photographs are welcomed and should be sent to the "Cabletalk Editor" at the above email address.