

# Cabletalk

## Surrey Hills Gliding Club Newsletter

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May 2019 – power edition

### Editor's notes

Shayan has written a long article about his trip to Scotland with the Air Cadets to fly power. I don't have the heart to cut anything as Shayan spent a long time writing this (just a few edits Shayan!) and it therefore deserves a whole issue. I am not, of course, saying that Shayan could ever be accused of constantly talking! Another issue with more Club News is in production and will be published soon.

### Gliding Solo to Powered Solo

*Shayan Hassanbigi*

Quite recently I travelled to Dundee in Scotland in order to do twelve hours of flight training conducted at Tayside Aviation with the potential of going solo, which was kindly awarded by the Air Cadets.





Firstly I would like to say that if I hadn't started gliding 18 months ago, I don't believe I would have had as much of a chance of securing such a scholarship in the first place, and that the skills I've gained from gliding were crucial in getting to a solo standard in just twelve hours.

**Day one:** The minibus arrived and we all jumped in wearing our flight suits and arrived for our daily briefing regarding the sorties we would be doing on that day. We were given a bag containing a checklist for

our aircraft, the first volume of the Air Pilot's Manual, and a condensed booklet of all the information we required in order to pass the 'Solo Exam' which examines your knowledge on Radio Telephony, Emergencies, Air Law and the aircraft itself.

I would spend most of my free time in between flights studying the manual and going over the contents of my previous and next sorties.

I was shown how to preflight the aircraft, so I went to do just that before my first sortie which was turning and getting a feel for the aircraft. Steve Codd was certainly not kidding when he said you don't need much rudder for these aircraft!

Needless to say this was quite an intensive course and I was already attempting Radio Telephony and requesting taxi instructions for our sortie!

**Day Two:** Whilst waiting around for my slot, me being just good old me, I decided to go and take photos with every single aircraft I could find, ranging from Senecas, shiny Cirrus aircraft to a Bird Dog!

After some more studying, I found myself in the cockpit once more going through the checklist and starting up the aircraft to depart in order to do a straight and level sortie.

My RT improved throughout the course but as you can imagine it was quite difficult trying to pick it up, however it all soon fell into place.

**Day Three:** Unfortunately there was no flying and the day soon turned into more of a photo shoot.

**Day Four:** Weather in Scotland bad? That's surely unheard of . . . there was no flying, however we did end up visiting the ATC tower and seeing what they do . . . needless to say it was a perfect opportunity to apologise in advance to the person that would be putting up with my awful RT for the next two weeks.

**Day Five:** I was holding at the taxiway before I had to backtrack and I saw a jet depart right before me. I backtracked and read back my take-off clearance, I then took off to do climbing turns in preparation for the circuit which we would do on our solo.

I was on approach and my instructor configured the aircraft for me to do my first ever powered landing . . . I decreased the power to idle and everything I'd learned from playing Microsoft flight simulator came back to me . . . I was



tracking the centre line . . . and focusing as much as I could, I rounded out and ballooned slightly, I kept my attitude and slowly pitched higher until the main wheels touched the runway. The landing wasn't hard at all . . . I was happy with it considering that it was my first landing.

After each flight my instructor would debrief me and, surprisingly, landings always came up as one of the positive things as well as my lookouts. I would be informed of what I would need to do to improve for the next sortie and/or to bear in mind.

I decided to take my Solo exam paper that day, and I passed with 88%. I was bored and borrowed a PPL Communications book to read back at the hotel.

**Day Six:** No flying – I did however give feedback on the questions that came up on the solo exam to others in my group. My group consisted of four people, one of which was a glider pilot at Bicester with 10 hours powered flying already and another one who had 50 hours P2 on turboprops at a skydiving company. Without a doubt if it wasn't for gliding, I could see how this course could be incredibly challenging, even more than it already was.

I had read the entire PPL Communications book the previous night and decided to take a practice exam on it, I averaged 81% across four papers with the highest being 85% and 75% as the lowest. You may wonder why I did that? For fun, perhaps I should do my bronze paper next!

**Day Seven:** I was halfway through the course with only three flight hours due to the bad weather and the forecast was only looking worse for the week ahead. Once you have reached six flight hours you are not able to rebook the course and return to complete the rest of it and I truly feared

that I wouldn't be able to finish it with any more than six hours, let alone a solo flight.

**Day Eight:** Thankfully the cloud base was high enough to do stalling sorties which involved power on and off stalls, including a very fun wing drop, so that I could progress onto circuits.

I was at the point where I handled all RT apart from requesting rejoins when we went out of the circuit. The workload was truly immense and I have major respect for flight instructors in the way that they are able to concentrate on their surroundings and observe a student whilst teaching. I was up to six hours by the end of the day and with another sunny day ahead, I was sure that a lot of flying could be done and that perhaps a solo could actually be pulled off.

Earlier on in the day when I was on final, having finished my CRAPP checks, I overheard on the radio someone requesting a QDM which I had learned whilst reading the communications book. I soon started to talk about it 200ft away from the ground with my instructor . . . understandably I received a quick debrief in the air containing notes on being quiet on final where my only focus should be my aircraft and the runway . . . whoops, once again I need to learn to be quiet sometimes.

**Day Nine:** Circuit practice . . . practice . . . practice. I was taught how to handle an engine failure after take-off, how to go around, how to fly a nice circuit (something I will now be integrating into my gliding soon) and how to do a rejected take-off. The engine failure after take-off practices were incredibly enjoyable. Unlike a gliding practice launch failure in which you don't know if or when it's going to happen, with power you can actually expect a practice engine failure as they are requested over the



radio. I found it hilarious because you think to yourself 'hmmm, I wonder what's going to happen to my aircraft within these next five seconds'.

I had a tendency to pitch the nose downwards a bit too much at the start whilst recovering from stalls and trying to get to the best glide speed, however I learned to iron out errors much like these throughout each sortie in order to minimize the chance of them re-occurring in future ones. It was so helpful having an

instructor that wanted you to fly within such a small margin, and the instruction was always in such a soft, gentle manner. He was an excellent instructor and was lovely to fly with.

**Day 10:** I was flying in a left hand runway 27 circuit and I was on base, I came to put the flaps down to TO/Landing in which I looked towards my wings to see whether they had extended or not and sure enough they had not operated! 'Sir, the flaps haven't extended'

and it turns out he pulled out the circuit breaker to see if I would notice which I thankfully did! If only I had that attention to detail on the day I went solo! My instructor demonstrated to me a flapless approach and brought the sortie to an end . . . time for a debrief.

**Day 11:** I woke up in the morning, and I was quite nervous since I knew that this was my final opportunity to give it my all, fly to precision and prove that I can go solo, since a solo was a potential result of this course, and not actually guaranteed. Having done the majority of my circuits on runway 09 at the start of my circuit practices, it was not the best feeling to see aircraft departing off 27 in the morning, however I remained positive, since although I had not completed as many circuits on 27, I was still relatively comfortable with it.

It was time for my check flight . . . everything was going wonderfully, up until my power checks on the apron where I increased the throttle to observe

that the RPM didn't go up to 1700 . . . I immediately closed the throttle and realised my prop was fully aft . . . awkward . . . I could not believe it. I was quite upset, however I tried to hide it as best as possible, my heart had truly sunk to my stomach. I continued on with my checks and strived to make no more errors . . . I really could not afford to make another one now.

I received taxi instructions to the runway and took off whilst verbalising everything I was doing. 'Ts and Ps in the green, speed is alive 50 knots, rotate' and I noticed that it just wasn't happening, had the hotel's breakfast finally taken its toll on me? Surely I hadn't put on too much weight throughout the course. We had a relatively shallow climb and at 200ft when I reached for the flaps . . . I realised that I had not actually extended them . . . I guess you can all imagine how I was feeling . . . I wanted both to laugh and cry. I tried not let that affect me or to dwell on my mind. I opted to do everything to





ensure I was flying to a tee for the next three circuits in order to redeem myself. Now more than ever I needed smooth landings, go arounds and engine failure practices executed perfectly and maintain high standards of RT. I soon heard my instructor say 'This one's to land', it felt as though we had been up for an hour which meant that I had run out of flight hours and finished the course... or so I thought.

I landed and I was thrilled to hear that he was happy to send me solo and that we were only airborne for 40 minutes, I was then debriefed, being told not to make the circuit too wide and to adjust my power settings a bit more on the base leg – not to do what I did at the start of my check flight. I was then briefed for my solo,

including how to divert to RAF Leuchars, where to pick him back up on the apron and that he was in the tower if I needed him. He jumped out and did a final walk around and I was on my own at last, feeling over the moon.

I went through my initial checks on the apron and called the tower... to request power checks... honestly what was actually wrong with me that day? The course Juniors who arrived a week after our course were listening to my radio calls and heard that! How embarrassing!

However, after that moment I was completely switched on, I said that I was ready for departure and was instructed to line up on runway 27 where I soon heard 'Tayside 1 Delta Bravo runway 27 cleared for take-off wind XYZ.'

I read it back and I was accelerating down the runway . . . with the flaps extended this time!

I rotated and climbed away where I continued on with my circuit, the workload was quite high and unlike my gliding solo I was not singing. I soon reached downwind, completed my checks whilst maintaining a good lookout, then reported downwind, transmitting 'Tayside 1 Delta Bravo downwind to land' across the frequency. I was told to report on final and sure enough I did, I knew the cameras were on me and being judged by my course colleagues on the ground, I tried to get that out of my mind and focused on the runway numbers where I slowly reduced the power to idle, looked towards the end of the runway and kissed the ground gently with my two main wheels. I vacated the runway to request taxi instructions and was congratulated by the

controller where I might have just replied with the most awkward thing to say ever 'Taxi to the south side of the apron and thank you for the congratulations Tayside 1 Delta Bravo' . . . why am I like this? . . . anyway, I taxied onto the apron where I shut my engine down and picked my instructor back up and requested taxi instructions to Tayside's parking.

It was an incredible two weeks, beautiful accommodation and food, met a lovely bunch of instructors and I aim to hopefully progress further in both my powered and non-powered flying.

I have also been called a traitor by my best friend at Surrey Hills Gliding Club and I may quote him on telling me 'I get it now . . . you couldn't thermal so you just had to cheat didn't you?' I am not accepting or denying his statement.

## Contact Details

*The Directors of the Club are:*

Jill Oake  
Jason Barton

*The Club Committee is made up of:*

Chris Leggett (Chairman)  
Marc Corrance (Secretary)  
Stephen Skinner  
Trevor Fielder  
Terry Hagerty

*Reporting to the Committee are:*

Richard Fitch (CFI)  
Steve Codd (Club Manager)  
Mark Kidd (Treasurer)  
Paul Hayward (Safety Officer)

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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.*