

# Cabletalk

## Surrey Hills Gliding Club Newsletter

June 2022

### Editor's notes

I apologise for the lack of Cabletalk over the last year but there was not much to report on – suddenly I have a few more articles. If anyone wants to write something for the next issue please do.

### Mr Pareto & The Club's Activities

*Terry Hagerty*

Many moons ago Mr Pareto hit upon the 80/20 Rule which states that 80% of outcomes arise from 20% of causes.

In organisations across the globe including all sorts of Clubs, Pareto's Rule nearly always applies – 80% of members don't contribute very much to the necessary work required to oil the wheels, while 20% seem to do most of the work, and so it is in SHGC.

Surrey Hills Gliding Club needs more help from the members please.

Huge amounts of the backroom work needed for the Club to function, invisible to most, is undertaken by a stalwart few – some of the Committee members, and some others. They are all unpaid (except the winch driver and the office manager) and they give up their time voluntarily and very frequently, both on and off the airfield. This workload has increased quite a lot and includes, inter alia, arranging the weekly flight roster, managing the

accounts, overseeing FreeFlight, booking flight vouchers, arranging fleet and company insurance as well as managing maintenance and repairs in conjunction with an inspector, managing workshop time, parachute checks, vehicle maintenance, liaison with Ministry of Defence, RAF, and City of London, and much more, including an abject shortage of instructors and/or duty instructors (ie those qualified to run the airfield). We are looking for assistance in all these and other areas.

If you feel you can help, would you please contact me in the first instance for a chat and I will refer you to the right person. Some of the areas we need help are duty pilots, instructors, vehicle maintenance, looking after the club infrastructure, and anything else that you think you can help with. We await your call and look forward to spreading the load!

### My Journey from a newbie to Assistant Category Instructor

*Sam Coole*

I started gliding in June 2017. I live about 1 mile from Kenley airfield and grew up watching the gliders. From a young age I've wanted to fly for a living and I knew this would be a great way to start. Kenley is a winch only site so this was my first experience in a glider. To this day I find aerotows boring in comparison!



*CFI Richard sent me solo in June 2018.*

I didn't quite get solo that Summer, and with school and daylight hours being very limiting I only flew a handful of times over the winter. However, I went solo about 2 weeks after finishing my GCSEs in June 2018. I was sent solo by our CFI, Richard Fitch.

A few weeks later I was let loose in our club Ka8, complete with a U/S electronic vario. I had to learn to soar properly, by "the seat of your pants" as many people say, fortunately the Ka8 is one of the best gliders for this. I spent the rest of the summer getting solo time in the Ka8 as well as the Ka6-CR eventually.

I joined Lasham in October 2018 and would regularly dig out the Lasham Youth Ka8 from the back of the hangar, unfortunately it didn't fly very much as there were many more shiny pointier gliders there.

By the end of Summer 2019 I got my bronze and XC endorsement, but didn't quite get to have a go at my Silver before I was back in college. (Kenley only fly Mon-Fri!)

I was hoping to do my Silver flight as soon as possible in 2020, but this was *slightly* delayed for obvious reasons. Once Jon Hill and I had fitted out a trailer to carry the Ka6-CR, I went and did my flight from Kenley to Challock. Kenley isn't famous for lots of cross-country flights as we are very limited by airspace – 2,500ft AMSL

which is 1,934ft QFE, with Biggin Hill, Gatwick and Heathrow all nearby.



*BYL's first time above 2000 ft in a long time!*

There are 2 small gaps to the East and to the West in which you can escape the London TMA, I chose to go East to Challock which is 65km, ideal for the silver distance. I managed to get to Challock and flew around locally to also get my duration and height gain.



*Floating around Challock*

I was also met by David Cooper, also doing his 50km from Ringmer in their yellow Ka8!

I started my BI training around this time, but courses were difficult to find. Fortunately, our chairman, Chris Leggett, contacted Pete Stratten and managed to find me a course! This was for early September 2020 and my CFI accepted me as a BI the day after the course.

I spent a few months doing as many trial lessons as possible. I even had the opportunity to fly one of my mates as well as my very nervous Mum!



*My very nervous Mum!*

I would also fly with the odd club member when a glider but no other instructor was available. I soon realised I really enjoyed teaching people but as a BI was very limited in what I could teach.

Around about the same time our chairman sent me a message asking how many hours P1 I had, “80-something” I replied. He wouldn’t tell me why he had asked! A few days later he and our CFI approached me and asked if I would like to become an as-cat, at the same time as Jon Hill, who was also a BI at the time. I had heard stories of how much of a commitment this was, but after a little thought I said yes, it sounded like great fun.

Rob Cray and Stephen Skinner, both from Ringmer, very kindly offered to help us through the course. We would do most the winch exercises at Kenley in our Grob 103s and the aerotowing and spinning at Ringmer in their K13s.

For those who don’t know, the instructor course is split up into 4 modules – A, B, C and D module.

The A module is also known as the “teaching and learning” module. This is a 1-day seminar that doesn’t involve any

flying. Unsurprisingly, this was held online via zoom, on 5 December 2020.

The B module is the club-based training. This includes flying as well as briefing. In short, as the “student instructors”, we had to do a long briefing on various exercises and then go and teach them. Most of the exercises in the B module tended to be the safe upper air exercises, like all the effects of controls, turning, stalling, circuit planning etc. We did the majority of these at Kenley, and where we could go soaring, we would get a lot in, otherwise it was one exercise per flight. We did all the aerotowing and spin/spiral dive exercises at Ringmer, as we don’t have aerotow at Kenley (nor particularly spinnable gliders!).

We decided it would be a good idea to get all the briefings done over lockdown while we couldn’t fly. Rob would let us know what exercise he would like briefing and we would prepare it ahead of time, and deliver it online over zoom. This actually worked fine for most briefings, although we left the circuit briefing and a few others until we could do them in person!

Due to the winter lockdown extending much further than expected, our B module wasn’t quite as leisurely as we had hoped! However, Stephen and Rob were great at getting us through the syllabus at a good pace.

The C module, otherwise known as the “pre-course assessment” was a 1-day event to check our progress on the B module, and to avoid candidates on the D module that were not ready. This involved a lot of chatting, and then we had to brief and fly an exercise. We managed to get a C module at the same place as our D module – London Gliding Club (Dunstable), which was very handy as we met our coaches before the D module. Most importantly, we could also work out our arrangements for how we were going to live on the airfield for a week on the D module!



*Even the view from my tent was good!*

Last but not least was the D module, the scary 7-day course! This was in a similar format to the B module – brief and then teach “Bloggs” an exercise. Except these tended to be the more *exciting* exercises – things like winch launching/failures, approach control, landing, spinning etc. We were very fortunate with the weather, the only sub-optimal day was due to an uninspiring cloud-base, which we used for winch launch failures. Other than that, most days were dry and relatively sunny.

I actually really enjoyed the D module, as every day was flyable – there was no need to rush anything and the whole course was relatively laid back. We even went out with our coaches for a curry on one of the evenings! Our coach was Andy Roch, who was helped by Martin Smith. I have to say they were both brilliant, whenever we inevitably made mistakes we could have a laugh about it, but then discuss and get it right the second time.

I have since started instructing at Kenley, as well as Ringmer (East Sussex GC) and Lasham, and I am really enjoying it.

My first day instructing at Lasham was on their Longest Day event, teaching people to fly at sunrise was certainly new for me! I was really lucky to have been awarded the BGA/Honourable Company of Air Pilots, Young Instructor Bursary. As described above there is a lot of flying over the various modules so it is a very big financial investment as well as just time, I can't express how grateful I am for this



*My first day instructing at Lasham was on their Longest Day event, teaching people to fly at sunrise was certainly a new experience for me! Top: Sunrise. Bottom: Sunset.*

bursary which facilitated me getting through this course. I know that being an assistant instructor is going to make my gliding all the more interesting, and it's nice to have a “purpose” to my flying, especially at my home club Kenley, where cross country flying is rare. As Surrey Hills Gliding Club is a small club, having 2 more local instructors is going to be a great asset to us, as we rely on visiting instructors as well as our own. I can't thank the BGA/HCAP enough for helping me through this.

For any Basic Instructors that are considering becoming an assistant instructor – I can highly recommend it. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a BI but I've found the handful of instructional flights I've done much more challenging and rewarding. It is a big commitment to get through the course but I think it's most definitely worth it.

# Breaking the ceiling

*Adrian Roberts*

In my fourteen years as a glider pilot, I had never exceeded a height of 2000 feet solo, and only rarely and marginally dual. With my English stiff upper-lip engaged, I will admit that it is an understatement to say that this was a source of frustration. There have been times when I could have gone higher, but the 2000 feet AGL ceiling that is imposed on us at Kenley by NATS so that we don't scare any Heathrow-bound airline pilots has meant that I have had to open the airbrakes in the middle of some very obliging thermals. My attempts to soar at other airfields were unsuccessful until our week as guests of Ringmer (the East Sussex Gliding Club) at the beginning of June 2022. I had done my Bronze XC exercises there in 2014, but time and money prevented me from doing any serious cross-country work; and then the pandemic came along.

Just before and after the pandemic, I realised that even at Kenley my thermalling skills were getting worse: I was rarely achieving more than a five-minute circuit, and this was diagnosed by our instructors as being because I had got into the habit of flying and thermalling too fast; 50 knots rather than 40ish which meant I was throwing away lift. Recently, armed with this advice, I had improved a little, and so I really wanted to break that 2000 foot ceiling at Ringmer.

I booked three days there, taking a sleeping bag and expecting to sleep on their club-house floor or the sofa for the two nights, and to eat beans on toast for my supper. But Steve Swan kindly leant me a camp-bed. He cooked a fried breakfast for about eight of us each morning, and on my first evening those of us that were around went for a very nice

meal at the Green Man just up the road, and on the second evening Steve cooked a spag bol for us both.

I knew that I would need a check-flight, probably several, as it was my first morning at an airfield that I hadn't used for several years, so I took the first flight with Jon Hill, in Kenley's Grob G-CKFG, an aerotow to 1500 feet. Conditions were initially good but soon we were thermalling under grey stratus, and it was only Jon's skill that enabled us to stay airborne for 38 minutes. Jon doesn't mince his words but you certainly get your money's worth of instruction. My speed control in particular came in for justified criticism, as did my circuit planning, but at least by the end I felt that I had learned something, and Jon requested only that I do another circuit with a Ringmer instructor. It rained for a while after that, but at the end of the day I did a four-minute winch-launch circuit in a K13 with John Weddell and he was reasonably encouraging.

On the next day, as John hadn't written in my log book, Marc Corrance asked me to do a check flight with him. A four minute circuit went well, but then he suggested one more check flight. I was itching to go solo but I wasn't going to argue. Half-way up the winch-launch, there was an almighty twang as the cable parted company. I correctly had one hand on the cable release, and had felt Marc pull it, and my immediate thought was that I was doing something dreadfully wrong, then I realized that this was a launch failure test. Fortunately while thinking these things I had put the nose down to the pre-determined approach speed, and I decided to circle rather than land ahead, and Marc was fine with that and signed me off to "go solo at Ringmer".

Ringmer's K8, G-DDRZ, is pretty much the same as Kenley's but even older, made in 1959, same as me. The principal difference

is that there is no external trim tab; trimming is done by a crude spring mechanism on the control column, which you adjust by turning a knob. There is no easy way of setting it before flight; you have to hope that the previous occupant had set it correctly for approach speed and no-one has fiddled with it in the meantime, and give it a few turns to the nose-down position to be on the safe side. A couple of winch launches that afternoon led only to disappointingly brief circuits, though to be fair no-one else was doing any better at that time without paying the extra for aerotows.

My last day was promised by the RASP wizards to be the best for thermals. It was today or never if I was to prove that I really could soar unaided. The problem with being the first on the flying list is that you are expected to go as soon as the gliders are out otherwise you feel in the way, and the K8 was on-line and I was the only person down for it. So there was another disappointing circuit, and more feedback that I was still cramping my downwind leg. But the K8 was on-line again and no-one else was jumping in, and although there was a cloudless blue sky with no obvious cues for a thermal, it was a whole lot better than an ideal day and no glider. At least it was nearly mid-day; the RASP had said it should be soarable by 11.30. So, a swig of tea and a wee, and off I went. I felt some massive jerks on the way up the launch and feared for the cable, but got to about 1100 feet without mishap. Assuming the jerks were probably thermals, I turned back along the runway and switched on the electronic variometer. With the altimeter winding down to 900 feet I was expecting more frustration, but then the vario gave a feeble bleep and I started a circle. After a couple of turns I realized that I was not going down further, and gradually clawed my way to about 1200 feet. By then I was

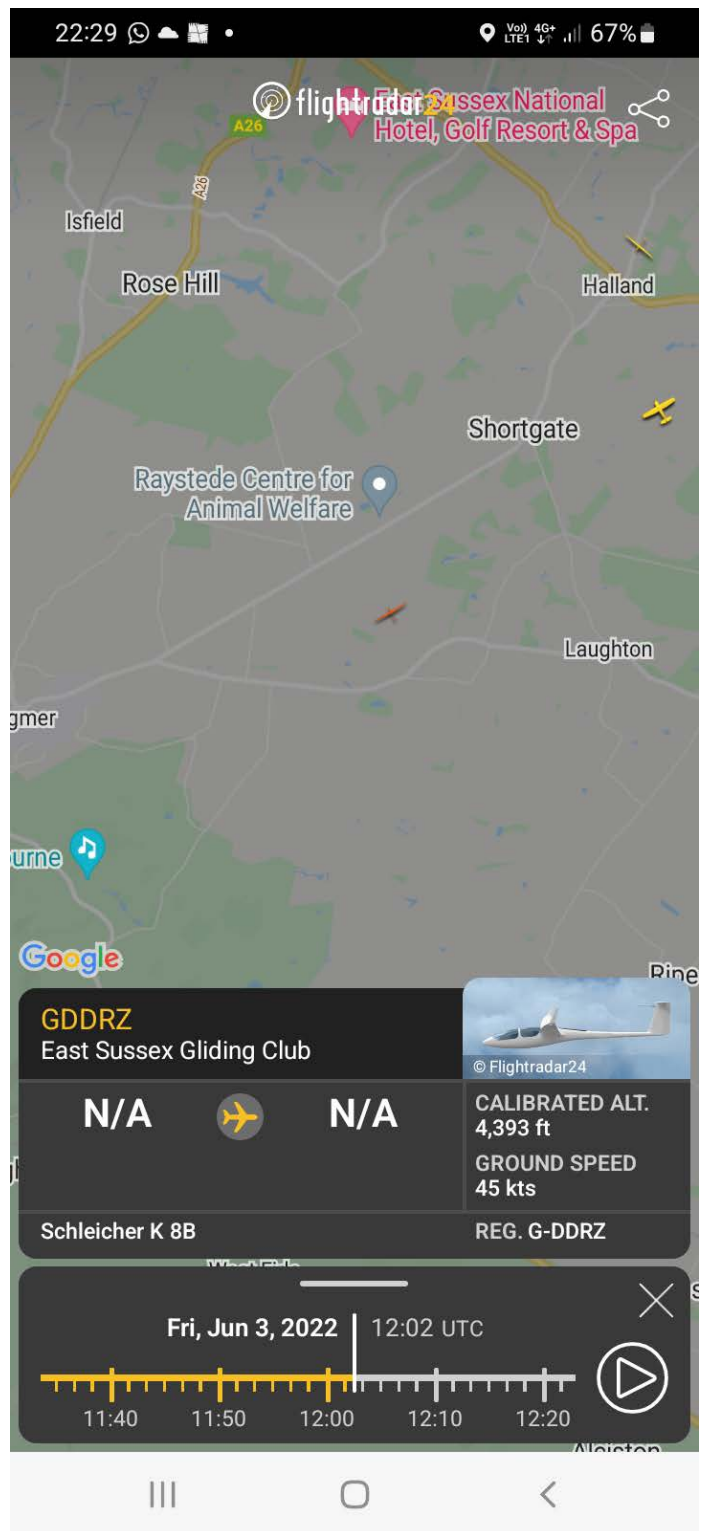
at Low Key and thought that I should get back to High Key in case I had to call it a day again, but I remembered that there were some farm buildings in the area which were said to produce thermals (there were still no clouds), so I decided I had the height to make one pass over them and see if there was any lift. To my relief, not delight just yet, the left wing lurched slightly, the vario needle gave a leap upwards, and I started a left circle. Gradually my height increased. Normally when I start going round in thermals I feel a little light-headed, which is probably due to not actually breathing properly since All-Out, but a few deep breaths and sticking my hand out of the DV panel into the cold air bring my metabolism under control. The big hand on the altimeter crept up . . . 1800 feet, 1900... and stuck there just as it did at Kenley . . . come on, come on . . . gradually we got over 2000 feet, and then I was up to 2600 feet. A deep breath, I was a proper glider pilot at last! I felt a slight nervousness at being so high, which I dealt with by the application of Reason: high is safe, unless you are actually on the approach.

By this time I was over Ringmer village, some way downwind, and didn't want to be much further downwind – it was probably fine even in the K8 but the winds are stronger higher up so I thought I had better get upwind of the airfield. Despite being a blue day I went through a patch where I was not losing height even in a straight line, but then I did hit some sink. Down to 1500 feet in the vicinity of High Key, I would have been reasonably satisfied if I had had to get into the circuit and land, but then I felt a lurch under my bottom, the vario bleeped frantically and I turned hard. This time I was up as though I had a jet-pack attached; and before I knew it I had left 2000 feet behind and was passing 3000 feet. With the aircraft trimmed to virtually fly itself, I permitted

myself to admire the view for a turn or two, not forgetting to also scan for other aircraft. The South Downs stretched out to the West; I could see a ferry approaching Newhaven to the South; to the North Uckfield was a grey splodge and Gatwick a white streak. There were some gliders in the middle distance at the same height; I felt a slight sense of triumph that they were state of the art fiberglass aircraft and I was in a classic aeroplane not that different from those used in those first soaring flights over the Wannsee nearly 100 years ago. And then I was at 4000 feet! The Surly Bonds of Earth had been well and truly slipped!

It did get a bit turbulent at that point; and I had absolutely no idea how long I had been up, so I decided to gradually return to the airfield, not trying to descend but not trying to climb either. Even then, when I was down to 2500 feet I found another thermal and couldn't resist gaining a few more hundred feet. From that height, there was no excuse not to get comfortably to High Key at about 900 feet. On a brief flight, the circuit and landing is the main event, but after a long flight time seems to speed up and your brain needs to go up a gear. I made a conscious effort to stay the proper distance from the airfield on the downwind leg; probably it still wasn't enough. My approach was less tidy than I would have liked; I was going slightly to the left as I flared; I hoped people would think I was trying to get out of the way of the gliders waiting to launch, but then I was down and stopped. I took a deep breath, flipped off the switches, and threw open the canopy.

I told everyone that I had got to 4000 feet, but that evening when I looked at my trace on Flight Radar 24 (the Ringmer gliders have transponders) it actually gave a maximum altitude of 4392 feet! I obviously hadn't been looking at the altimeter at the top of the thermal, but it



was getting bumpy so I was probably concentrating on my airspeed and bank angle. The figure on FR24 is AMSL, so subtract 82 feet for the QFE of Ringmer and about 1100 feet for the winch release and my height gain was about 3200 feet. (The time on the FR24 photo is UTC which is an hour behind BST). So, not quite the High Untrespasred Sanctity of Space, but still most satisfying!



*A blast from the past. Photo: Bob Sluman.*

## Contact Details

*The Directors of the Club are:*

Jason Barton

Terry Hagerty

*The Club Committee is made up of:*

Chris Leggett (Chairman)

Marc Corrance (Secretary/Technical Officer)

Richard Fitch (CFI)

Andrew Strand (Safety Officer)

Stephen Skinner

Sam Coole

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

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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.*