

Cabletalk

Surrey Hills Gliding Club Newsletter

April 2023

Editor's notes

Yet again there has been a long time between issues of Cabletalk for which I apologise. Due to circumstances there have not been any trips away and not too many achievements that people wanted to write about.

However, this year the 615 Cadets have reserved the airfield for a week at the end of May, so a group of members are going the The Long Mynd – hopefully that will be the first of many trips away for members this year and the opportunity to fly somewhere completely different.

How to go solo in 172 easy lessons

Michael Bollan

15 February 2023 was notable in my mind for three reasons. In the order they happened it was the 50th anniversary of decimalisation, I had my first ride on the back of a motorbike (courtesy of Alan Stevens) and finally I managed my first solo glider flight. Quite a day. Strangely, in my opinion, only the first of those got a mention on the 6 o'clock news.

My gliding adventure started in the late 1990s. I was a skydiver in those days, but I was also father to my now 28 year old daughter. Skydiving is a time consuming sport and parachute drop zones are particularly unfriendly places for a

toddler. That was no contest – the skydiving had to go. One of my skydiving acquaintances had mentioned that he used to pack the parachutes at Kenley and that got me thinking. A bit of digging and I discovered that there was a week's intensive gliding course available at Whyteleafe. I signed up. And I loved it. And I wasn't bad at it. But it was just as time consuming as my previous hobby so I reluctantly walked away from the sport but vowed I would be back when time allowed.

The thought lingered in the back of my mind and by 2020 I was ready to give it another go. My wife bought me four trial flights and I booked to come along. Then Covid happened and we all went into our first lockdown. When the restrictions were lifted I rebooked but I was again thwarted, this time by the weather. First it was raining and then I got a call telling me it was too hot to fly. The irony of 'Good weather stops play' was not lost on me.

Eventually, on 23 September 2020, I got back in a glider. Sitting behind me was an instructor, Sam Coole, who was slightly younger than the shirt I was wearing but clearly he knew his stuff and he gave me a great reintroduction to the sport. As I knew I would be, I was hooked. I started to attend regularly and was enjoying it immensely when we closed down again for lockdown 2 in early December.

It was to be several months before we could restart. Those early days were very encouraging and my log book shows I was making reasonable progress but I also



Ready for spin training at Challock (Kent Gliding Club).

realised that with a few more miles on the clock it was a bit more difficult than it had been twenty odd years ago. I was no natural and it was slower than before but I was working through the skills. Paul Hayward was my main instructor in those days and he must have been thinking I would be rolling off his production line in good time.

And then things seemed to change. I started to find the whole thing immensely difficult and I went into reverse. I seemed to have not just hit a wall but fallen off a cliff in terms of my learning. There was even a time when I considered packing it in, such were my levels of frustration. Two conversations stopped me. Chatting with Steve Randall, he said this was one of the most difficult things he'd ever tried to learn. I realised that it wasn't just me. The

second was a chat with Paul in the clubhouse after I had spent another day failing to make a decent co-ordinated turn. I was bemoaning my continuing poor performance when Paul told me not to worry. He said one day the penny would just drop and I would say to myself 'Why didn't I do that three years ago?'. It was a laugh out loud moment and it is one of the reasons I persevered. I'm glad I did. I was very disappointed when Paul decided to stop instructing. I hope I wasn't the reason for that but his undoubted skill, patience and great wit were something I really appreciated and I know others feel the same.

After Paul moved on Geoff Purcell became my regular instructor. It took me a while to get used to flying with somebody new and Geoff was probably wondering what



Flying to Croydon.

was going on for much of the time but things started slowly to improve. I realised I was making progress when I was advised to get myself down to Challock to do a bit of spin training. Before I went I made the mistake of viewing a few videos of people demonstrating spinning. I wondered at that point, not for the first time, what I was thinking of. But in August last year, alongside Jerry Ostrowski, I journeyed to Challock and ventured into the air with Alan Gartside, one of Challock's resident instructors. Alan is another of those who can get straight to the nub of the matter and after a couple of flights in their Puchacz he was happy to sign me off. The welcome at Challock was very warm and I promised myself a spin refresher course later this year. This trip did, though, provide an illustration of the different

ways that instructors and students think about things. I was told that I would love the Puchacz because it 'spins very easily'. I was kind of thinking just the opposite and I am still not convinced! Maybe in the fullness of time...? Around this time Geoff also introduced the dreaded launch failure exercise. If you know this exercise is coming it kind of takes away its relevance and I have to say Geoff would make a great poker player. I never saw any of them coming. I thought I'd worked out when the first one was going to happen but I think he knew that too. So while I was waiting for the thud of the departing cable he had asked Phil on the winch to cut the power instead. It took a moment or two to work out what was going on and I managed to do the necessary. I may have called him a rude name at that point but

all I heard from the back was a quiet chuckle! There have been a number of other frankly underhand tactics but I refuse to give Geoff the satisfaction of seeing them in print. He knows what they were. But I enjoyed every one of them (after the event) and they're an essential part of the learning process!

After that I knew I was getting close to the big day but for various reasons, one being that I kept going on holiday, the day never seemed to come. The weather was either against me or I flew badly. Then I found out that I needed to get my medical declaration done, without the medical I could not go solo even if signed off by the instructor. My frustration boiled over a little at this point and I told the Chairman that I wouldn't come along to fly because if I did get cleared and couldn't fly solo I would probably self combust. I don't know what Chris thought but he calmly



First solo – being congratulated by instructor Geoff Purcell.

put my toys back in the pram and told me it would all be sorted in time. Clearly I'm not cut out to be a prima donna. He was right and I was wrong.

One advantage I did have of having to wait for the weather was that I got to fly in some pretty challenging conditions with the benefit of having an instructor in the back. In the long term I think that will be to my advantage.

So then the big day came. I did a couple of flights and as I was preparing to get in for a third I realised Geoff wasn't getting in with me. I was nervous but ready. My first solo launch was a nerve shredder. A problem with the radios meant that I was sitting waiting for the winch to take up slack for over a minute. It seemed considerably longer at the time but the flight itself was a pleasantly uneventful five minutes. I was grinning for about a week after that.

I've managed a few more solo flights since and I've realised the old cliché is true. This is the time I will really start to learn to be a proper pilot. It's quite a different mind set when there's nobody in the back, But it's a challenge I am relishing.

To finish I'd like to sing the praises of SHGC. I won't single out individuals but it's a special place with a proper and inclusive 'club' atmosphere. I've had nothing but great support through all this. The many messages I received after going solo were so uplifting. My own cohort of

| Landed |
|---|
| Fee 12.27 |
| G-CKFG Launch Method Winch Up 14:38 Down 14:43 Duration 0 hrs 5 mins P1 Michael Bolla P2 undefined Fee 10.55 |
| G-CEHO Launch Method Winch |

Log book proof of solo flight!

ab-initio students are a great bunch and we've supported each other through the process. Those of us who aren't there yet will be there soon and I hope I am there to see them all. The instructors, I think I've flown with all of them, do an amazing job. In what other sport could you get that level of expertise made freely available? They have nerves of steel and I will certainly be relying on their advice again as I try and progress through the sport. My next target is my Bronze licence and I'll certainly need their help for that. Onwards and upwards!!

How it began

Roy Musselwhite

I have been asked many times by friends, family and club members how I got started in gliding – So here goes!

When I was about 5 or 6, I used to visit my grandparents and they had a book all about the armed service in World War 2. One of the chapters was devoted to flying and in particular how they trained fighter pilots. It had pictures and diagrams of the manoeuvres they were taught to use during dog fights such as stall turns, clover leaves and loops which really fascinated me.



First solo at Challock.

Fast forward to when I was at senior school. When in our last year (I was 14) we had a visit from the careers officer, we were all in class and were asked one at a time what we wanted to do on leaving school. When it was my turn I said 'a pilot'. I didn't realise at the time why this raised a few eyebrows as maths to me was a foreign language. I could never understand why anyone would want to multiply $A \times B$ to get C , it wasn't until some time later when at college that the light bulb came on and I understood.

In 1968 I went to the cinema and saw the original Thomas Crown affair with Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway. It was when he popped up over the trees in his glider that once again I was intrigued.

A very good friend and I used to go to Farnborough for the air display and on one particular occasion we were sitting in the stand, when a glider gave an aerobatic display. We were at the top back seats and as the pilot completed a loop, he beat down the runway at the same level as us and I can still remember the whoosh noise it made and left me yet again thinking how do they do that without an engine?

Time passed and now I was at work and married with 3 children. However, one day on our notice board an advert appeared for an open day at the Kent Gliding Club, so I took my wife and youngest son down for the day and had a flight in a K21. When I was asked 'did I want to have a go at taking the controls?' I said 'yes'. He suggested that I make a left turn, at that point I forgot all he had told me, and my mind went back to the old black and white films of a spitfire making a tight turn and I did the same stick hard over to left wing pointing straight down at the club house and the voice in the back shouting 'I have control!' After we safely landed, no thanks to me, I was told by



Solo flying - just the beginning of a long association with gliding.

someone on the ground that I now had a 90-day temporary membership, unfortunately at that time I felt I didn't have the funds to carry on.

It was sometime later that my mother-in-law asked my wife what I would like for my birthday, and I said a voucher flight at The Kent Gliding Club and, as they say in all the good books, the rest is history. I still get the same feeling of satisfaction today as I did at the beginning of just flying, be it a short circuit flight or a half decent soaring flight.

AGM

The Surrey Hills Gliding Club Ltd 2023 Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 16th May at the Portcullis Club at 19:00. The bar will be open and there will be food afterwards.

For your entertainment

Christian Fowler

Below are details of two regular gliding podcasts.

Soaring the sky

Soaring the sky is an aviation podcast all about the adventures of flying sailplanes. Join Chuck as he talks with other aviators around the globe. You never know who the next guest will be on Soaring the sky.

It's available to download and subscribe to your smartphone. Alternatively, you can listen to it on your computer or tablet. There's now a back catalogue of around 100 episodes.

The show is produced roughly fortnightly and covers a wide range of subjects. It

comes from the 'Atlantic region of the USA' but does include contributors from around the world.

Web address: <https://www.soaringthesky.com/episodes/>

The thermal

The Thermal is a monthly podcast devoted to the sport of gliding. You'll hear about the latest cutting-edge sailplanes and technology. There are also sections on gliding safety, instructing, gliding history, cool pilot interviews, towing, winching and a whole lot more. The show is released the 1st Saturday of every month. It comes from Canada and has more of a safety focus than Soaring the Sky.

Web address: <https://thethermalpodcast.libsyn.com>



Paul is 6' 4" but the public decided to build a snowman in the middle of the airfield bigger than him during the winter!

Chairman's notes

Chris Leggett

As I finish my sixth year as Chairman I would like to thank the members and the committee for their support.

The Gliding Club only works because of all the people who donate their time and expertise to help others and sort problems.

While talking of help, there is one person who has been with the club for over 15 years and was the resident winch driver, mechanic, grass cutter, fixer and many other jobs. The whole club owes a massive vote of thanks to Phil Chapman. We are delighted that Phil has stayed on as a member and he can now spend more time at the fun end of the airfield.

Phil's last few months were taken up training Paul Blackmore, our new winch driver. Paul has benefitted from Phil's expertise and experience and we look forward to a summer of great winch launches in his capable hands.

As well as that there are all the instructors whose expertise and time enable us to operate and train week in week out - thanks to all the instructors.

Since the last issue of Cabletalk there are a number of people who have reached different milestones. Andrew Strand completed his Silver badge by doing his 5 hour flight - he did it with plenty of time to spare - all 18 seconds! He then went on to complete his Ass Cat rating.

Jason Barton qualified as a Basic Instructor and Chris North returned to the club after a 9-year gap and also regained his Basic Instructor rating.

Darren Edwards, Gary Campbell, Nawaz Dhandala and Michael Bollan all became solo pilots. The Chairman (oh that's me!) also passed the Bronze XC test with Jordan Bridge at Lasham.



Can anyone think of a suitable caption?

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)

Gary Campbell (Safety Officer)

Stephen Skinner

Sam Coole

Philip 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.