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## Vintage Gliding Club 50th Anniversary Rally

The Vintage Glider Club has celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a rally, hosted by the Cotswold Gliding Club, at Aston Down airfield, Gloucestershire.

The Portmoak Heritage Collection, represented by Matt Stickland, Richard Lucas and Lindsay MacLeod, took their T49 Capstan to the Rally and the warm-up Rendezvous at Nympsfield airfield. The two events were attended by approximately 170 pilots who brought more than 70 vintage aircraft.

Many of the types that flew will be familiar to SGC members but this was also an opportunity to see rare and, in some cases, unique aircraft. doing what aircraft are meant to do. To give a hint at the variety :

*Schleicher Ka2/4/6/7/8/14, Rhönbussard, Olympia 2, Oberlechner 'Steinadler', DFS Meise, DFS Rhönsper-*

*ber, Standard Austria, Harbinger 2, L10 Libelle, Carmam 'Aiglon', Minimoa, Wassmer 'Javelot', Scheibe 'Bergfalke', Hütter 17, Kranich III...and, of course, some of Slingsby's finest – Kite, Petrel, Dart, Tutor, T21, Prefect, Sky, Skylark 2 & 4, Swallow and Capstan.*

The Rendezvous during the week preceding the Rally was an opportunity to rig and fly from Nympsfield and to meet old and new friends from within the Vintage Gliding community. Nympsfield is situated in the heart of the Cotswolds close to Stroud and lies approximately 10km from Aston Down. For many this was the first glimpse of the region and a chance to explore useful ridges and likely thermal sources. Richard was able to provide 'local knowledge' having previously flown from both Nympsfield and Aston Down. Although this was 48 years ago his impressive recall and input was gratefully appreciated.



The UK weather lived up to its reputation for July but despite wind and rain there were some memorable flights. Due to high winds, relocation to Aston Down at the end of the first week was mainly by road although the two Kranich IIIs elected to be towed over rather than de-rig. VGC President, Andrew Jarvis, displayed his leadership qualities by flying his T21 over in 'challenging' conditions.

The weather continued to impact on the Rally. Morning briefings were a mixture of dry wit, wet weather and useful information. The optimism of the attendees resulted in at least a few flights each day – launching and landing in interesting parts of a very large airfield. Torren-

tial rain did provide an opportunity to visit the JetAge Museum in Gloucester which houses a rare photographic history of jet development plus aircraft and parts undergoing restoration. There is even a restored Airspeed Horsa cockpit for us glider enthusiasts.

Cotswold Gliding Club provided the warmest of welcomes and a full programme of events for their visitors. The non-flying highlight of the Rally was the International Evening which brought together VGC members from all parts of the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, USA and Canada. Attendees were invited to wear national dress, as appropriate, and provide samples of their local food and drink.

This was tackled with great enthusiasm and varying degrees of solemnity. General approval met the Scottish contingent's emergency rations of single malt and haggis pakora but universal acclaim went to the Hungarians for preparing a magnificent devil's cauldron of goulash.

Continuing on a culinary theme, the Vintage Glider Club's formal 50th Anniversary dinner was timed to follow the club's AGM on



Thursday evening. As a means of running a fast, productive meeting this is hard to beat. Previous minutes were read and approved, a change to the club constitution proposed, seconded and approved, election of officers to key posts approved, AOCB dealt with expeditiously and the meeting brought to a close within 34 minutes.

Although weather shortened flying time this year the Rally was enjoyable and undoubtedly a success. By close of play there was already much discussion and early planning for reuniting at the 51st Rally in Pociunai, Lithuania in July 2024.

## A Walk in the Woods

For some of our older readers, the figure of Kevin Hook at the club in August 2023 will have brought back some memories.

Kevin was an accomplished glider pilot who vied head-to-head with John Williams for many years, contesting to achieve distance flights and win trophies. He was very successful at both. He became increasingly involved in the club, eventually moving from part-time volunteer administration to a more formal employment role and helped develop the club, including the building of the first new hangar which has been so successful.

However, I was reminded when meeting him in August, of an event many years ago.

On the 17th February 1995 I achieved my Silver height and armed with my suitably sealed barograph, came gleefully in to the club-house where Bob and Mary Jones were chatting with Kevin. All three were Official Observers and I asked them what I needed to do now to verify the claim. They explained.

"Well, you go across the south field right to the edge of the airfield and you will find a gate. The gate leads to a path around the edge of the old

sand pit and in to the woods where you will find a house."

As you may imagine, by this point I thought that this had to be the biggest 'wind-up' in history but they delivered the directions with a straight face and so very convincingly.

"It's a wooden house. Just knock on the door and ask for Richard. He will be able to check the calibration and sign the BGA form."

I looked out from the clubhouse across the south field to the far side where two fences intersected to try and spot the gate but really couldn't see it.

"Over there?" I queried.

"Yes," they all nodded in agreement, while looking impassively at me. "Come back when you get it signed."

"Thanks," I replied unconvincingly and left the clubhouse clutching my barograph and headed across the south field thinking that I was the victim of the most elaborate "rookie" gag in history but faced with no alternative.

So, beyond where the first of our new hangars exists, and currently where a Motor Falke re-

sides, to my surprise I found a small fence gate through which I opened and headed along a faint path that threaded its way along the edge of the old sand pit workings.

I disappeared deep into the woods and within a few minutes a lovely wooden house came into sight. I knocked gingerly on the door.

Moments passed, then the door was opened by a woman say, "Hello, how can I help you?"

With the barograph tucked under my arm and feeling like a self-conscious schoolboy, I explained that I was from the gliding club and had been sent here to ask for Richard.

"Yes," she said, "he is in his workshop down there," pointing to her left where I saw a large workshop annexe.

Thanking her, I moved on and approached the workshop knocking once more and I could hear footsteps crossing a wooden floor before the door opened.

"Yes?" "Hello. I'm looking for Richard," I announced. "I'm from the gliding club."

The man looked at me, paused, passed his gaze to my barograph and without further question said, "Come in." What I did not know then was that I was meeting one of the founder members of our club and a man with a remarkable history.



The man in this workshop was in, in fact, Wladyslaw "Richard" Rozycki and one of the earliest members of the club, having joined the SGU at Balado in 1947.

For the next part of the story, I am indebted to Bruce Marshall's obituary to Richard published in S&G in 1996, and to Ann Dandie, wife of the late Ian Dandie for providing additional material from her own recollections. Ann was the daughter of

Bill and Dorothy Lawson, who had a home in Kinnesswood, and her parents were great friends with the Rozyckis, as well as founder members of the SGU and pivotal players in the early years at Portmoak.

Richard, as he was known, was born in Krakow, Poland and escaped from there when the Germans invaded in 1939. Making his way by foot for much of the way across the continent, he came to Britain where he joined the Polish Parachute Regiment and was based for some time near St Andrews. Ann has no further details about that time but he studied engineering before assuming a role with Bruce Peebles (Engineering) Edinburgh and it was then he met

his future wife, Yvonne - the lady at the door.

Ann cannot recall how he became involved in gliding but it was to become a



significant part of his life, such that, once married, he obtained some land from Jack Taylor who farmed Levenmouth Farm; purchased a surplus WW2 pre-fab house and placed it into the wood, converting it into the re-modelled wooden cabin complete with workshop.

He was member of many syndicates - one interestingly enough being called 'Friendship 7' in salute to the American spacecraft and perhaps indicative of the number of members - and a club official. Although he retired from active gliding in the mid-1960's, he retained a keen interest in the club and became a senior official observer. He set up his barograph calibration station in his workshop and will have been responsible for the



authentication of many hundreds of claims.

His engineering skills were not wasted either with Messrs Lawson, Rozycki, Milne and Berry building the club a winch called "Bloody Mary" in 1962. You can see a picture of the winch in the

book: The Scottish Gliding Union, A History 1934 - 2008 compiled by Ian Easson

Additionally, he was an authority on natural life in the area, even setting up his own hide by the sand pit to observe the wildlife; kept bees and had his own weather station.

With his passing, Ian Dandie and Colin Golding set about creating the calibration room which is in the workshop down at the old farm and there is a plaque on the door in memory of Richard. Later, when Yvonne died, the house was sold to Tony Pentelow from Nympsfield GC, who used to visit every year with his friends and then sold again to a local developer who demolished the

building replacing it with the Southfork look - a - like you can see on the site today.

My barograph trace was carefully checked; the claim was authorised and returning to the clubhouse, Bob Jones filled in the rest of the paperwork commenting, "You found it all right then?"

I just smiled: there was a house in the woods after all.

Many thanks to Ann Dandie for sharing her memories and to Bill Evans for the pictures.

*Gerry Marshall*

Bibliography: The Scottish Gliding Union, A History 1934 - 2008 compiled by Ian Easson

## Portmoak Gala winner

The winner of the 2023 Portmoak Gala in Scotlandwell enjoyed her prize donated by the Scottish Gliding Centre, flying on Tuesday 29th August.

Elaine Carruthers, from Scotlandwell, is a well-known figure in the area has been an active member in the Community for many years involved in many projects and looking after the village so well.

A little nervous before the flight (is that her praying), she settled down and loved every minute of the flight with local in-



structor, Gerry Marshall from Kinnesswood.

She commented, "It is a such a beautiful area and it is lovely to watch the gliders here."

The Portmoak Gala Committee thanked the club for the generous prizes.

*Gerry Marshall*

## A new winch driver

Not the first and surely not the last tale from a newly minted winch driver at Portmoak! Some of you will know me from my weekend days at the club where I am navigating my way to bronze.

I really enjoy being involved in the activities of the day, the morning prep, helping at the launch point, helping new and visiting members etc. I'm also partial to a bit of mowing! But the thing that has intrigued, eluded, and in some ways scared me, was the winch. How does it work, how difficult is it to drive, how do you conduct a safe launch (or launch failure)? If I could answer those questions, maybe I could overcome the anxiety - I tend to over think these things - and get myself a new skill that helps keep our flying operation running.

So here I am in an impromptu moment a few weeks ago, after offering to help at the winch (I learned how to tow out the winch cables a while ago. Which by the way is a great chance to get involved at that end of the field), sitting in the cab with Eric observing some launches.

In the weekend's since, I've been able to build up my experience in different wind conditions and with a few different glider types, apologies to those first few crews who probably thought they were being launched off a Nimitz!

The winch is a noisy and powerful machine, but it's simple enough to operate, with clear procedures to follow. Eric is a calm teacher and covers everything clearly and always in context of safety. It's fascinating seeing a launch from the other end of the wire and I hope this contributes to me improving as a pilot too.

If it intrigues you to find out more, just catch a lift down on the tow out truck and sit in on some launches with Eric. Who knows, you could be writing this next!!

Ps. If I'm on the winch I would love feedback (after you land) on your launch, good or bad, as I think that is a great way to improve.

*George Kemeys*