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## Latest News

It has been some time since the last newsletter. The gliding season is now in full swing and our brand new 2 seater is flying.

Portmoak and also a number of new BIs (Basic Instructors) and IFPs (Introductory Flight Pilot).



Air experience flights have started some time ago on Tuesday's and Friday's and Walking on Air have also started flying again on a Friday.

During June, one of our members brought his friend from Berlin to fly as a friends and family member. She had never been flying before and was taken aloft in one of our two

A big thank you to all the helpers for the many tasks around the airfield: aircraft maintenance, airfield maintenance, air experience flights and all the instructors offering booked flying.

We have a number of new instructors after the latest course held at



seat trainers. That day she spent flying in Scotland has her hooked and she has made provision to join a local club near Berlin, on her return at

the end of this month. It is satisfying to know that a 25 year old has got the flying bug in Scotland and even more satisfying to know that a gliding trip to Portmoak has inspired a young person to pursue such a delightful hobby.

I am still waiting for some articles, so the next edition will be available next month and cover a number of competitions—old and new,

And finally, a big thank you to Malcolm and his team for building all the tables and benches in the car park and in front of the club house.

*The Editor*



## Gliding in Zimbabwe 1983/84

Upon leaving the RAF in march 83 – I took a couple of months out and then took a job in Zimbabwe, maintaining Hawk T60 a/c for the Zim Air Force (as a civvy), but I really went there to get back into gliding. I volunteered to go down to the operating base at Thornhill AFB near Gwelo (now Gweru) because I knew there was a gliding club nearby. The gliding club was based at Moffat Field on the other side of town. Moffat was an old WW2 Rhodesian Air Training Group

ting to a member of the local GC who volunteered to take 2 of us to the clubhouse that evening. I poured myself into the back seat of his car and when we arrived at the airfield I said to him "this road is rough" - his reply was "it is the main runway LOL". After impressing the Locals with our drinking qualifications and BS abilities (the clubhouse/bar was in the WW2 Control Tower) we returned to Base for the night.

The Club at that time had 2 Blaniks for training, very nice to fly from the front seat - like sitting in a tin armchair with legs horizontal and if one got bored one could play around with the wing area increasing Fowler type Flaps - although they were not exactly necessary in strong African Thermals. The Blaniks were too valuable to risk on

solo flying (no foreign currency for new gliders) so after the first 2 solos we moved on to a Slingsby Swallow. I had not flown for 11 years prior to joining this club and had never done any thermalling. I struggled to form a mental picture for thermals and they gave up trying to teach me in



airfield – home to No. 24 Air Observation School – which had operated Fairey Battle, Airspeed Oxford and Avro Anson aircraft.

Us civvies lived in the Sergeants Mess and on my first Friday I was 'introduced' to the mess with their equivalent of a 'yard of ale' etc, got chat-

the Blanik, so when I converted to the Swallow - I still could not stay up. Because of my previous experience (Air Cadets) I was fastracked into the next single seater which was a Slingsby Skylark 3b. Shortly after that thermalling seemed to 'click' and I became a fairly normal glider pilot at last.

lovely rough and gusty thermal. Did I have a barograph? Of course not and had to wait another 36 years for gold height at Portmoak.

The Airfield had been built using local materials and the old hard runways were crumbling away, the old main runway was lovely smooth grass



The club aircraft instruments were an interesting mix – the ASI's were calibrated in km/h, altimeters were in Feet and variors were m/s. The ASI was no problem as one just had to remember some key speeds – so just different numbers to remember. It was not that unusual to see 5 m/s on the vario but one had to keep in mind that one could also encounter 5 down as well.

As one might imagine there was some really lovely gliding weather to be had – the airfield was at approx 4,760 feet AMSL and we sometimes got a 30o diurnal temp variation (it was not unusual to get down to 0o overnight) which occasionally gave 12,000' cloudbase – normal cloudbase was 'only' 5 – 8,000'. My personal best climb was from 600' up to 11,500 AGL in a

but a large Meat cold store had been built at one end of it, so it had been relegated to Hangar flights only. The 'new' main runway was mostly sand/dirt with a really rough area at the old hard runway intersection.

It was an all winch operation using a home built winch fitted with a nice old V8 engine. The airfield was too rough for stranded cable, we actually used fencing wire which kinked very readily and Cable Breaks were a regular occurrence.

I returned to UK after 12 months as I had to get a 'real' job but did manage to return for a couple of gliding holidays, one of which involved a repair on a Blanik wing (but that is another story).

*Baz Vickerman*

## A fine End to the Weekend

After a week in work, dashing to the airfield to arrive by 17:00 is sometimes a stressful thing. Though the traffic was back to back on the bridge, I managed to arrive before the scheduled time. Two flights had already gone up though.

My first Air Experience pilot of the evening was a woman from a village near Glenfarg. She had seen our tow-plane release gliders over the village many times. She described herself as a former "trolley dolly" who'd never been up in a

small aircraft, but she wanted to try the controls.

It was a warm evening, but thankfully there was some westerly breeze. Standard practice for the evening was a 1500ft "hill-lob". I only got to about 1800ft, making exercises a matter of leaving the hill, losing as little as possible in the exercise, then ducking back to gain a bit of height for the next one.

My student was chuffed with her flight, saying she could now brag to the other villagers. Many

of them were furloughed commercial pilots, grounded for a year or more. She seemed to have brought a significant part of the village along with her as they'd pulled three of our tables together

asked to swap for his standard flight. It took about 20 minutes to reach just under 5,000ft AGL in HPV.

We did the standard exercises on the way down



for a mass picnic to witness the event.

Next was a young fella who was excited about his flight and the prospect of taking over the controls. He was thrilled when I said goodbye at the launch-point. From Edinburgh, he indicated he would be back to take advantage of the temporary 28-day membership.

Next was a mile-high flight for his wife, but she'd

to join the hill. We were the last flight of the day so there was less pressure to get back ready for the next flight. He enjoyed himself and may be back, possibly his wife as well.

Thanks to the volunteers, Ken who supervises, and the office staff for making all this possible. And to the people who buy the vouchers - thanks!

*John Thomas*

## Caption Competition

**New this month, a caption competition with prizes!**

2 pictures, 29 years apart. Send in your caption for each picture by using the form at <https://forms.gle/NhFths5LBgZAm63GA>.

Your entry must be received by 16 August 2021.

There will be an anonymous judging and the best caption for each picture will win a free winch launch.



1992 - Ash25



2021 - Perkoz