

From the home of the *Scottish Gliding Centre*

Portmoak Press

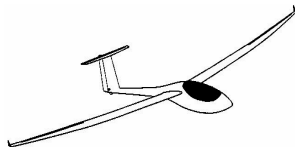
Editorial – Ian Easson

As I started to compile issue 26, I couldn't help reflecting on the diverse weather we've been experiencing during the early weeks of this year. We've had winds, floods, snow, freezing fog and brilliant sunshine, and that was only January! February brought more water and some of the wading birds from the RSPB Sanctuary on Loch Leven could be seen making themselves at home in the large puddles on the airfield. So far, the start of March has brought good drying winds and the field is beginning to come back to normal.

For those of you who study these things, you will have noticed that Issue 26 should have gone out in January and Issue 27 is due in April. In order to pull things back on schedule, I have decided that this bumper issue will be a double-issue. This means that issue 27 will be due in June.

Despite the weather, the year started with visitors and locals taking advantage of some good days to get to diamond heights in wave, and some have managed to complete impressive cross-country flights. The recent issue of S&G showed the rest of the world what sort of gliding experiences are to be had from Portmoak, with excellent articles from John Williams, Kevin Hook and Val Alexander and some stunning photos from Andy Bates. For those of you with access to a PC, I recommend you to visit the ladder page and download some of these flights.

As we approach the evening flying season, we have been increasing our advertising campaign and have benefited from some very good publicity on local radio station - Kingdom FM. We ran a series of competitions every day for a week with prizes of Trial Lesson vouchers, and a couple of the presenters have enjoyed decent flights with Kevin. It remains to be seen just how successful



this extra publicity has been but I am always on the look out for ideas and suggestions to encourage new members (usual contact details).

On the subject of asking for your help, I am really struggling to gather material for the book (History of the SGU) for the 1980s. I have written the chapters up to the end of the seventies and I have some items from the nineties onwards but there is a definite shortage around the eighties. I am on the look-out for stories (funny or serious) from club members, or visitors, who were active during that period, so please dig out your logbooks and recall those epic flights – remember, the book is the history and your stories could form part of that history. Although photos are useful, the real interest comes from the stories but if you are uncomfortable writing articles send me the facts and I'll draft the words around those. As a taster, I have included the introduction and the first chapter, on page 10, just to get you interested (I hope).

On a similar vein, *Bruce Marshall* reminds us that this year is the 50th year of the SGU at Portmoak. For the record, the first launches from Portmoak were made on 23rd June 1957, when Andrew Thorburn [Chairman] and Tom Davidson [CFI] made two 2 minute circuits in a T21b in nil wind conditions. The club is considering a number of options to mark this anniversary –so watch this space.

One last plea to all members, new or old, experienced or ab initio, regular contributors or not, to consider submitting material for *Portmoak Press*. Details of how to do this can be found below.

Cut off dates are as follows: End of December for January, end of March for April, end of June for July and end of September for October. Material can be sent to me either typed or hand-written and

dropped in my mailbox beside the payphone, or e-mail me at

ian.easson@btinternet.com



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this briefing, information will be circulated regarding the use of the units. It would be beneficial if those attending give their email details to me and I will email briefing papers out on Sunday 18th March. Thanks.

Colin Hamilton

Pegasse Replacement

The club has secured a replacement aircraft for the Pegasse. A Discus B is expected to be delivered mid-March and all pilots wishing to fly this aircraft are reminded to seek a full briefing before flying.

Board Members.

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Chairman | John Williams |
| Vice-Chairman & Winch | Douglas Tait |
| Treasurer | Kevin Hook |
| Technical & W.O.A. | Joe Fisher |
| Publicity & P.R. | John Guy |
| Membership Communications | Kate Byrne |
| Club Secretary | John Munro |

Club News

A number of items have been circulating on the club web-forum (Portmoak Instant), but for those who have not read these, or have no Internet access, I have included some of them here (Ed).

Message for all BI, Asst Cat & Full instructors

You may have been aware that we have been undertaking the 1st stage of a flight test programme which seeks to evaluate the FLARM collision avoidance system for use in the Portmoak soaring environment. This stage is coming to an end and the CFI has authorised moving to the next stage, which involves fitting units to a number of club two-seaters and possibly the tug and the Falke. Before anyone flies with these units fitted, it is essential to have a full appreciation of the way in which the units work and what the next stage of the trial seeks to accomplish.

It is intended to hold an instructors briefing immediately after the AGM on Saturday 24th March. Prior to

Expedition to Shennington (12th-26th Aug 2007)

This year we have chosen Shennington, otherwise known as Edgehill, as the lucky club to host a visit from our members. Why Shennington?

1. I did a week there last year and found it friendly.
2. SGU members managed several landouts there and found the club helpful and friendly.
3. Large airfield with grass and hard runways.
4. Winch launching as well as a Cub for Aerotow (Bidford was aerotow only).
5. There is a ridge - works in W - NW - the airfield is at the TOP of the ridge
6. There is a bunkhouse (of sorts) Camping is OK and the club has a kitchen open to members use
7. Lots of B&B's, Pubs, Hotels etc. (about 6 miles from Banbury)
8. Situated 1/2 way between Bicester and Bidford there is plenty of easy opportunity for early cross-country pilots to do 50 or 100k's without being far from another airfield and lots of big fields.
9. Experienced pilots have masses of scope for longer tasks.
10. With prior notice, training available with Shennington Instructors.
11. Charges are reasonable: Temp member @£6 per flying day, winch £7, Tug £25 - 2000ft Camping etc. free, tea and coffee free.

We have several takers already and it is a great opportunity to sample another club and an area with

high odds of good thermals in reasonable weather.



Please let me know if you are keen to come and I will coordinate a list etc.

Nick Stratton

Pegase FCB

nick@stratt.f9.co.uk

Portmoak Instant

This is to let you know about some changes to the Portmoak mailing list. Due to the recent merger between Iweave Ltd. and 2e-volve Ltd., all of Iweave's web hosting services have been moved to another new server. This includes the Portmoak Instant mailing list (pmkinstant@iweave.co.uk). Because the new server uses a different operating system (windows as apposed to unix) we have also had to change the software we use for the mailing list.

After some initial teething troubles, the new mailing list software seems to be working correctly.

Nonetheless, there may be some glitches in the transfer.

If you have not been receiving your Portmoak Instant emails, you may need to re-subscribe to the list.

There have been several postings over the last few days and are easy to identify as they begin with "[pmkinstant]" in the subject.

If you have tried to post to the mailing list and found that your posting has not been sent you may also have to re-subscribe to the list. When you post you should receive a copy of your posted email almost immediately. The new list software will not accept emails from accounts not on it's list.

To subscribe to the email list send an email to pmkinstant@iweave.co.uk and include the word subscribe in the subject field.

I will be updating the page on my website shortly so that the details are correct :

<http://www.iweave.co.uk/sgu/instant.php>

I will be changing my contact details in the next week or two and will let you have the new details in due course.

Bob Jones

Airspace Updates

On 15th March we see the next round of airspace changes. These will effectively limit us to flying below FL195



except in specially designated high level gliding areas. At the same time, new letters of agreement come into effect for opening P600 at weekends and for crossing the local airways.

On Friday 23rd March, there will be a presentation on these changes and the effect of airspace in general on flights from Portmoak. This will start at 19:30 in the clubroom. Generally, the Friday evening talks are aimed at Bronze level pilots. However, this one is likely to be of interest to a much wider audience. Please put the date in your diary.

Once the details of the new LOAs are finalised, a revised airspace briefing will appear in the airspace section of the club web site. Airspace files for your pda will also be made available on both the club and the BGA web sites.

Kevin

Mountain flying...

Assuming it's available (I'm checking), is there anyone interested in sharing the hire of the local Duo Discus at Jaca for a week this summer?

Ideally I'm looking for someone familiar with mountain flying at Jaca and happy to fly 2-up with someone less experienced – that's me! The club's minimum requirement is 100 hours for P1.

Donald.carmichael@blueyonder.co.uk

Donald Carmichael

Spreading your wings..

We have been invited to run a small expedition to Easterton in the last week of May / first week of June (26th May onwards). Normally they only fly at the weekend, but will consider arranging a couple of days or so weekday flying as well.

Apart from the location & date, nothing much is arranged. However, at their instructor meeting in January, their suggestions included: learning aerotow, field landing checks, navigation, 5 hours, 50k, Silver height etc. Of course, it all depends on the weather! If you want to know more about the club, their website is helpful:

<http://www.highglide.co.uk/>

Sally

www.nevis-view.co.uk

Got your radio licence yet?

I have contacted Colin Rodger who is prepared to provide training and examination facilities at Portmoak allowing successful participants to obtain a CAA Radio Operator's Licence. The proposal is that we have a one day training session in the briefing room followed by sitting the written paper. This would probably be run on a Saturday or Sunday and on two dates thus giving participants a choice as to when they attend although we would need to more or less balance the numbers attending. The talking part could be run on a one day intensive basis but may be better for 2 off 1/2 days as we are not power pilots and the scenarios are not familiar to us. Colin feels that he can only do 3 to 4 trainees on each session so it is going to spread out a bit more. Cost for tuition and exam fees will be £150.00 each and you will also have to pay the CAA for issuing the licence if you are not going for a power/SLMG licence.

Anyway, those are the facts. Please get back to me at douglas.tait@btinternet.com if you are interested or you have any comments or suggestions. If we are going ahead with the project I feel that we should get on with it with the aim of completion before the good weather/light nights come in.

Douglas Tait

An opportunity to help WaterAid

Some years ago, when I was a sprightly lad of 15, I bought the maps and books and started planning for a summer adventure of doing the West Highland Way. Unfortunately, due to apathy, weather, sex (occasional lack of), and booze it never materialised (boy, I led an exciting teenage life)...until this winter when I was being my usual reflective self and realised that this was one project I should have completed and never did. January came, and went, and then an email popped up in my in-box at work about a charity Munro Challenge in aid of the Environment Agency's nominated charity WaterAid. I thought, I need to do something worthwhile and charitable (its been some time since I did a sponsored silence or bob-a-job week) so I resolved to combine both my historical project and

my current social conscious thoughts at the same time...The West Highland Way/Munro Challenge. The plan, yes there is a plan, is to get a sleeper to Glasgow/Fort William in the second week in June and wander;stumble;crawl (delete as appropriate) down the West Highland Way. This may involve some work colleagues/friends but it might just be me, myself and I. Feel free to join in for a leg or two (there are about 7 stages).

A bit about the The West Highland Way.....

This was Scotland's first official long distance walking route. Originally conceived in the 1960s, it was completed in October 1980. The Way links Milngavie to Fort William – a distance of 152km (95 miles) - from the outskirts of Scotland's largest city to the foot of its highest mountain, following the shores of its largest freshwater loch. It passes from the lowlands, across the Highland Boundary Fault and on into the Scottish Highlands. The West Highland Way passes through a wide range of terrains, ranging from lowland moors, through dense woodland and rolling hills, to high mountainous regions. This variety of environments provides habitats for a diverse range of wildlife species, both flora and fauna. Some species are more common than others and some are rarely seen.

If we are lucky enough to spot one of the rarer varieties, we will consider ourselves privileged.

I will be raising sponsorship separately for the WaterAid charity but I have set up my own website, with another legitimate charity at:

www.justgiving.com/neilgoudie

Most of you will have used this site before so I think it is self explanatory. Let me know if you have any problems. By telling you all now it will mean I can't go back on this silliness I have thought of.....

I have added a 'cheeky' auto-reply for anyone who is kind enough to donate/pledge to this site. If you know me you won't be offended; if you don't know me (that well) please don't be (too) offended.

The blog is being designed at the moment and I should have it ready at the end of this week.

Thanks and L8rs.

Neil Goudie



SGA Ash 25 Allocations (Comps)

Competition places are starting to fill up but there are still some available. Like last year we aim to offer a series of two-week coaching opportunities, the following table lists all the relevant comps, dates, locations, etc. so if you think you might be interested, or just want to know more about it, get in touch with me asap.

It's a great experience but you don't have to take my word for it - ask Val Alexander, Kevin Hook, John Williams, or Alan Boyle. They've all done it in the last 2 or 3 years.

- Who should apply? Anybody interested in flying cross-country.
- Do you have to be a competition pilot yourself? No.
- Do you have to have an ambition to be a competition pilot? No.
- Do you just want to learn more about flying cross-country? Great.
- Do you just want to soak up the atmosphere of a comp, see how the top pilots do it, get some top class coaching, or just have a gliding holiday? That's fine too.

So what are you waiting for? Stop mucking about - get in touch now!!

Competition Enterprise – Sutton Bank

(P1 – tba, P2 – tba, P2 – tba)

30th Jun – 6th Jul: Travel & practice week.

7th Jul – 13th Jul: Comp week.

Bicester Regionals – Bicester

(P1 – Ken Hartley, P2 – tba, P2 – tba)

14th Jul – 20th Jul: Travel & practice week.

21st Jul – 27th Jul: Comp week.

Open Class Nationals – Lasham

28th Jul – 3rd Aug: Travel & practice week.

4th Aug – 12th Aug: Comp week.

Junior Championships – Tibenham

(P1 - tbc, P2 - Gary Alan[Angus], P2 - Steve Wrigley[Edi Uni])

13th Aug-17th Aug: Travel & practice week.

18th Aug-26th Aug: Comp week.

Mountain Soaring Championships – Aboyne

(P1 – tbc, P2 – Sally Woolrich, P2 – tbc)

27th Aug-1st Sep: Travel & practice week

2nd Sep – 8th Sep:

Comp week.

Applicants can contact Mike Carruthers (Chairman SGA Operations Committee) at
Address: 39 Church Street
ALLOA, Clackmannanshire
FK10 1DH
E-mail: sga.opscom@gliderpilot.net
Phone: (Home) 01259 213503 - Office 0131 245 3578 - Mobile 07801 039461.

Mike Carruthers

SGA ASH 25 allocation for Portmoak

The following calendar entries are valid for Portmoak and the full list can be found on the club noticeboard:

7th April to 20th April

30th April to 4th May

19th May to 29th June

9th September to 12th October

Interested in Cross Country?

Over the last little while a few things have been put in place with the hope of encouraging interest in cross country flying from Portmoak. These include a simple method of expressing interest in an aerotow, an “available-for-retrieves” board, and a dedicated cross country forum. I'll take each in turn.

Aerotows

In an effort to encourage more use of the tug, from now on the daily flying list will include a column entitled "A/Tow Pref'd". If you would like an aerotow but are a bit shy about seeking out a tug pilot, then put your name on the list and place tick in this column. You are not guaranteed to get a tow, but tug pilots will be able to see how much trade they could expect if they get the Pawnee out. They may then feel it is worth their while.

Retrieve List

One of the biggest impediments to heading off cross country is the worry about who will come and retrieve you if you land out. The great thing about the XC weeks is that you know that there is a group

of retrievers ready and willing. To try and reproduce this on a regular basis a Retrieve



Board has been placed in the computer room beside the payphone.

On this whiteboard you can volunteer as available-for-retrieves by writing your name and mobile number. If you are first of the day, change the date and wipe out the old list ready for a fresh start. Seeing a number of names on this list should help give you a cosy feeling as you turn your back on the ridge.

Cross Country Forum

The Members board now has a new section, the Cross Country Forum. All matters related to cross country flying can be discussed here. However, there is one condition. Any threads which are date-specific, and are "stickies" at the top of the thread list, should be kept strictly on topic. These threads may well be getting used to make specific arrangements such as early tows or winch launches. The above measures are simple and of a self-help nature. Their success is entirely dependant upon how willing we are to help ourselves.

Keith Buchan

Silver Distance & Cross Country Week

10th – 14th September 2007

- Got bronze and looking for your silver distance?
- Done silver and still hoping for a 100km diploma?
- Keen to fly cross-country but don't have anyone to retrieve you?

These weeks aim to help all of the above. Starting with a briefing at 18:00 on Sunday 9th, we aim to make sure you have all the equipment and planning to make your cross country successful.

We aim to set tasks to take best advantage of the weather on each day but, if it is not soarable, exercises will be set to convince you of the glide performance of your machine and to ensure that you go home with increased experience of field landings and retrieves. If we suffer non-flying days, we will discuss cross-country theory on the basis of your questions and worries.

Everyone will be expected to be available to retrieve one another, so land outs should be almost completely hassle free. Each pilot will be expected to ensure that his aircraft has a

roadworthy trailer prepared for use before the first day's flying.

Run by John Williams, Kevin Hook and Colin Hamilton, there will be limited opportunities to fly cross-country in a two seater or to fly on a lead and follow basis.

Bring your own glider or make use of one of the club's single seaters. To take full advantage of the weather, there should be no more than two pilots per aircraft and one pilot per aircraft is highly recommended (the courts may not consider this to be a valid reason for murdering your syndicate partners!)

Facilities available for the week:

Junior, FUS

Junior, FFY

Pegase, 591 (or its Discus replacement)

DG505, 5GC when appropriate

Barographs for all club aircraft

Tug with pilot on standby for the week

Met, NOTAM and task briefings each day

& **Encouragement to give it a try**

Please make your booking with Irene during office hours.

SGU Trophy Award 2005/2006

The Thorburn Two Seater Trophy

For the Longest (handicapped distance) flight in any Two Seater

Evidence:- Photographic/GPS.

Does not need to be declared. Maximum of 3 TPs.

Winners: Santiago Servantes and Valerie Alexander in ASH 25, 925

Flight details: Task: CFF-HEU-CAD-RNI-CFF.

507 km Actual, 445 km handicapped distance.

Date: 4th November 2006

Note: An example of good use of aerotow to get into the good conditions. Released 34 km from POR at 5274 feet just east of Crieff but got down to under 5,000 feet by 36 km out – precision flying you'd expect from a professional airline pilot!



The Boyle Altitude Trophy

For the greatest gain of height.

Evidence:- Calibrated barograph trace as per BGA badge claim.

Winner: Tony Brown in DG202, Z10.

Flight details: Height gain of 14,790 ft.

Date: 28th May 2006

Note: Runner-up – Kevin Hook on 4th September 2006 with height gain of 14,111 ft.

The Marshall 100 Km Triangle Trophy

For the fastest (handicapped speed) 100 km triangle (but less than 125 km).

Evidence:- Photographic/GPS

Fully declared and witnessed flights only; as per rules for 100 km diploma part 2; must be 28% triangle.

Winner: Kevin Hook in DG400, 320.

Flight details: Task: PCS-STI-MVN-PCS 103 km actual distance, 78 km/h handicapped speed.

Date: 21st March 2006

Note: Kevin is the only pilot to have qualifying flights for this trophy. He was also second with his flight 6th March vh 73 k/h, and third with his flight of 12th August; vh 65 k/h.

The Andy Penswick Trophy

For the longest (handicapped distance) flight in a club glider, i.e. not including S.G.A. owned aircraft.

Evidence:- As per Trophy 1.

Winner: John Williams and Vic Leitch in DG505, 5GC.

Flight details: Task: BDO-FET-BDO. dh 184 km; da 180 km

Date: 28th May 2005

Note: Significant in being the only qualifying xc flight in a club aircraft during the season. (Add your own comments – probably a very pleasant Sunday wave flight.)

The Parker Distance Trophy

For the longest distance flight originating from Portmoak. Not handicapped.

Evidence:- As per Trophy 1.

Winner: Kevin Hook in his DG400/17, 320.

Flight details: Task: BOC-BSS-KRM-LBU-FIN. 754 km actual distance, dh 747 km; va 98 km/h; vh 97 km/h.

Date: 30th May 2006

Note: Had to get to BOC to start and had to get back from FIN after the task. Engine only really used for launch and was off well before passing abeam WLD. Total distance flown was about 870 km.

The Docherty Handicapped Distance Trophy

For the longest (handicapped distance) flight originating from Portmoak.

Evidence:- As per Trophy 1.

Winner: Kevin Hook in his DG400/17, 320.

Flight details: Task: BOC-BSS-KRM-LBU-FIN. 747 km handicapped distance, da 754 km; va 98 km/h; vh 97 km/h.

Date: 30th May 2006

Note: For the first time in several seasons this is for the same flight as trophy 6.

The Sutherland Out and Return Trophy

For the farthest (handicapped distance) turnpoint achieved from Portmoak for a flight originating and ending at Portmoak.

Evidence:- As per Trophy 1.

Winner: Dave Clempson in his DG200, HBD.

Flight details: Task: PCS-BSS-L Kinord-KLN-PCS 578 km actual distance. BSS is 181.2 km actual, and 186.8 km handicapped from Portmoak. (Over the task, dh 596 km)

Date: 30th May 2006

Note: It was a close run thing. Kevin also went to BSS that day and went on to do 754 km at 98 km/h, but unfortunately was beaten for this trophy on glider handicap as he had rigged in 17 metre configuration. In 15m mode both the DG400 and the DG200 have handicaps of 97, but the DG400/17 has a handicap of 101.

It is worth mentioning that John Williams also had a meritorious flight that day, flying from Loch Venechar (LVE) to Tongue (TOG) and back for a (first ever?) 500 km o/r in Scotland. TOG is 264 km from POR but unfortunately John had to use the motor more than 40 km away from POR before starting the task and so this flight won't be considered as a flight originating from Portmoak.



The Lomond Trophy

For the longest triangular flight achieved from Portmoak subject to the 28% rule.

Evidence:- As per Trophy 1.

Flights do have to be pre-declared.

Winner: John Williams in his Antares 20E, Z7.

Flight details: Task: PCS-HTY-LOQ-PCS. 440.7 km actual and 390 km handicapped. Va 73 km/h, vh 65 km/h

Date: 14th July 2006

Note: Scratching in Glen Clove (1800 ft. - midges?). Dodging Tornado Jets. Scored as beer can turnpoints. (Just missed logging in sector at LOQ)

The McClay Championship Trophy

For the winner of the **Open ladder** competition.

Winner: Kevin Hook

Details: best 6 flights giving 16,920 Points (Runner up John Williams with 13,343 points in best 6 flights)

The Peter Copeland Trophy

For the winner of the **Weekend ladder** competition.

Winner: Kevin Hook

Details: 5,213 Points in only 6 flights (Runner up Sant Cervantes with 4,406 points but in best 4 flights)

The “Hot Wings” Trophy

For the winner of the **“Hot Wings” ladder** competition.

Winner: Z Goudie

Flight details: best 6 flights giving 10,100 Points (Runner up John Williams with 10,050 points in best 6 flights)

Note: Z likes to fly FAI triangles in thermal and doesn't stray very far from the task lines. No messing – and very easy to verify. Only 50 points between first place and runner-up this year.

The Junior Ladder Trophy

For the winner of the **Junior Ladder** competition.

Winner: No winner this year.

Details: No junior claims this year.

The Height Gain Ladder Trophy

For the winner of the **Height Gain Ladder** Competition

Winner: Kevin Hook

Details: 4,022 Points in best 6 flights. (Scoring formula for Height Gain remains unchanged so it is interesting that Kevin bettered his last year's winning points by a single point.)

The Darren Powell Shield

For service to the club during the year.

Winner: Charles Guthrie

The Nick Wales Trophy

For the “most improved pilot”.

Winner: Garry Simpson

Instructors Quaich

Most popular instructor.

Winner: John Riley

Service Salver

For outstanding service to the club.

Winner: Dave Clempson

Duty Instructor/Supervisor Rota

| | | |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------|
| March | Sat 17 th | Ian Norman |
| | Sun 18 th | Andrew Bates |
| | Sat 24 th | Alan Boyle |
| | Sun 25 th | John Hendry |
| | Sat 31 st | Joe Fisher |
| April | Sun 1 st | George Ross |
| | Sat 7 th | Gerry Marshall |
| | Sun 8 th | Bob Jones |
| | Sat 14 th | Chris Robinson |
| | Sun 15 th | Mike Carruthers |
| | Sat 21 st | Ian Dandie |
| | Sun 22 nd | Kate Byrne |
| | Sat 28 th | Gerry Marshall |
| | Sun 29 th | Alan Boyle |
| May | Sat 5 th | Joe Fisher |
| | Sun 6 th | Bob Petrie |
| | Sat 12 th | Andrew Bates |
| | Sun 13 th | Kate Byrne |
| | Sat 19 th | Neil McAulay |
| | Sun 20 th | John Hendry |
| | Sat 26 th | Bob Jones |
| | Sun 27 th | Willie Lang |



Duty Pilot Rota

| | | |
|-------|----------------------|-------------------|
| March | Sat 17 th | Donald Cowan |
| | Sun 18 th | John Crighton |
| | Sat 24 th | Ally Doig |
| | Sun 25 th | Gary Donachie |
| | Sat 31 st | Jeff King |
| April | Sun 1 st | George McKay |
| | Sat 7 th | Jim Miller |
| | Sun 8 th | Lee Mitchell |
| | Sat 14 th | Gordon Hunter |
| | Sun 15 th | David Coats |
| | Sat 21 st | Gary Simpson |
| | Sun 22 nd | Dave Clempson |
| | Sat 28 th | Peter Williams |
| | Sun 29 th | Graeme Somerville |
| | | |

The Book

The following pages have been reproduced from the book "A History of the SGU (the first 70 years)" being written by Ian Easson

Introduction

When I first thought about writing this book I had been the editor of the Scottish Gliding Union club magazine *Portmoak Press* for about two years. I have never had a problem finding stories and articles for the mag, as many of the club members are only too willing to regale stories of their epic flights – as, I suspect, can be found in most club-houses.

In the main, this book is a collection of stories from those intrepid glider pilots who have soared the Scottish skies over the last seventy years, although the first couple tried it long before the Scottish Gliding Union was even thought of. As you would expect, no history is complete without the facts and figures but I have tried to keep these to a minimum. So, lets start at the beginning:

Early glider flights in Scotland

History books show that the first recorded 'flight' in Scotland took place in 1507. This flight was performed by an



Italian, John Damian, who was the Physician of King James IV and Alchemist to the Scottish Court. He had arranged for a pair of wings to be made and, with these firmly strapped onto his arms, jumped off one of the walls of Stirling Castle – declaring he was off to France. His flight, however, turned out to be a short one. He plummeted to the fields below Castle Rock, lucky to sustain only a broken thigh. As help was being administered, he complained that the person who had made his wings had used chicken feathers instead the eagle feathers that he had specified, and everyone knows that chickens don't fly!

It wasn't until the 1890s that the next pages of Scottish gliding history were written. Born in Bath in 1867, to a Scottish mother and an English father, Percy Pilcher joined the Royal Navy at the age of thirteen. He left when he was twenty and joined the shipbuilding and engineering company of Randolph Elder (later to become Fairfields) of Govan, Glasgow, as an apprentice. In 1894, Percy became an assistant lecturer to Sir John Biles - professor of naval architecture and marine engineering at Glasgow University - as well as working as a draughtsman at

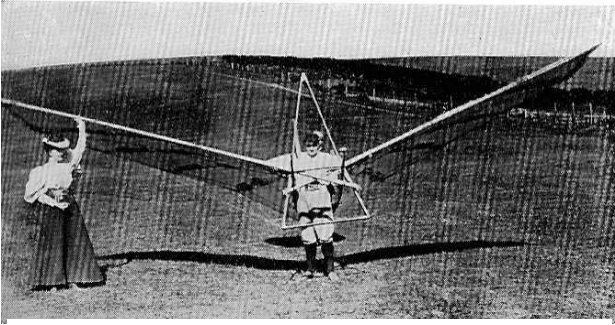


Percy Pilcher

what would later become John Brown's shipyard in Clydebank. Percy had developed a keen interest in aeronautics and in 1895, with the help of his sister Ella, he built his first man-carrying hang-glider in the sitting room of his lodgings in Byres Road, Glasgow. Before attempting to fly his own aircraft, he visited the pioneering aeronautical engineer Otto Lilienthal in Germany, and was allowed to fly Otto's glider.

Brimming with new found confidence, Percy returned to Scotland eager to try out his own design. In June 1895,

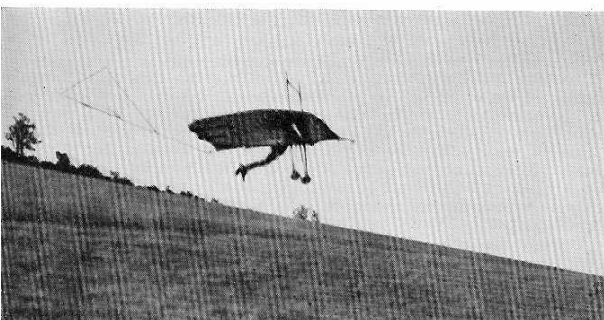
Percy and Ella took their glider out to Wallacetown Farm, near Cardross in Dunbartonshire, for its test flight. His launch method was simple but effective, and very similar to the modern hang-glider launch methods – run downhill into wind, and jump.



Percy and his sister Ella with his first aircraft – The BAT

As a keen designer and draughtsman, Percy kept detailed records of his test flying and made numerous changes to improve the performance of his flying machines. His first design was the 'Bat', and there soon followed the 'Beetle', 'Gull' and finally the 'Hawk', incorporating the world's first spring undercarriage.

During his later test flights, he received the devastating news that Otto Lilienthal had been killed whilst flying one of his own gliders. This untimely event probably promoted Scotland's Percy Pilcher to the leader of world aviation. His Hawk glider, although mostly built in Glasgow, was completed and test flown in Eynsford in England when Percy moved to Kent.



Percy flying his fourth aircraft – The Hawk

Whilst demonstrating and test-flying his Hawk, Percy continued to develop new designs. His fifth machine was radically different from the first four inasmuch as this one would include an engine. The engine had been completed and test run and was just waiting to be coupled to the airframe, when Percy was asked, by Lord Braye, to do a demonstration flight of his Hawk at Stamford Hall. The flight took place on 30th September 1899. The weather was very wet and windy and his aircraft became sodden. Percy didn't want to disappoint the spectators so he decided to go up in the 'Hawk'. The first attempt resulted in the parting of the towline, followed by a gentle landing. Early into the second flight, after travelling about 200ft. and gaining only about 30ft., structural failure caused his Hawk to plunge to the ground. His battered body was pulled from the wreckage but he died in hospital two days later, at the age of thirty-two. This earned him the sombre distinction of being the first Briton to be killed in a plane crash.

As part of the centenary of flight celebrations, Glasgow's Lord Provost unveiled a plaque to Percy at Glasgow airport, and a television program renewed debate about whether his plane could have flown. With TV funding, researchers built an aircraft based on Pilcher's plans - with some modifications, including a modern, lightweight engine. It flew for 1 minute and 25 seconds, 26 seconds longer than the Wright brothers managed on their historic day.

Had it not been for his untimely death, Percy Pilcher, engineering lecturer from Glasgow University, might have made the first powered flight in a heavier than air machine, rather than Orville Wright, a bicycle mechanic from Dayton, four years later in 1903.



Chapter 1

Wandering in the Wilderness 1934 – 1937

In Glasgow, in 1934, the place to be “seen in” was in one of the many Tea Rooms popular at the time. These usually took four or five floors in elegant buildings in the style of the great Glasgow architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Customers could expect to sample fine teas from across the globe, feast upon multi-tier cake stands of pancakes, scones, cake and chocolate biscuits, and were waited upon by ladies in smart black and white uniforms. So it was, on 7th July 1934 in Miss Buick’s Cranston Tea Rooms at 147 West George Street, Glasgow, a collection of gliding enthusiasts met to form the Scottish Gliding Union (SGU). Records don’t show how these people were invited to this momentous event but it was obviously not by accident. The Honourable Alan R. Boyle was elected Chairman, John (Johnny) W. Gardner the Secretary and Hugh M. Berry the Treasurer. The rest of the Board was made up of A.T.H. Tilson, E.T.H. Godfrey and W. Cameron. During the year, the club progressed steadily along the administration route with occasional sorties into the countryside to look for suitable sites. The first site given serious consideration was Cairnoch Hill in the Campsie Fells, between Carronbridge and Denny, but the proprietor refused to negotiate. One land owner of a flat site at Grangemouth was keen, but his charge of £7 per month was deemed to be too expensive [rumour has it that this land later became part of the refinery site at Grangemouth – probably at considerably more than £7 per month!]. Other activities that year included fixing annual subscriptions at:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Flying Members | £3 3s 6d |
| Associate Members | £1 1s 0d |
| Entry Fee (Both) | £0 10s 6d |

The Constitution of the Glasgow Gliding Club was adopted and the Board of Directors discussed the



possibility of engaging Mr G.E. Collins, from the London Gliding Club, as the SGU instructor. The club also agreed to support the governing body, the British Gliding Association (BGA), in their representations to the Air Ministry over a proposed subsidy for gliding.

The club’s second year, 1935, was another busy year with the highlight being the receipt of a BAC Primary Glider, donated by the Crieff Gliding Club. Most weekends were spent visiting possible sites which included: Kilsyth, Denny, Sheriffmuir, North Lethams, Wetherhill near Saline and Fairlie. At these sites ad-hoc board meetings were usually held in someone’s car and were not minuted. When they could all get to Glasgow they met in Central Halls, 25 Bath Street. The Honourable Alan Boyle, still Chairman, was appointed as the SGU representative on the BGA Council.

The following year, 1936, was marred by the death of founder member Adam Houston Anderson. He died in the crash of a ‘Flying Flea’ at Renfrew. There seems to have been more actual gliding during the year, albeit most flights were measured in seconds.

Test flights were carried out at Lurg Farm, Gartcarron, near Fintry on 23rd and 24th April in an RFD Primary:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Sat 23 rd April: | J.W. Gardner | 29, 31 and 33 secs. |
| Sun 24 th April: | J.W. Gardner | 62 secs |
| | Mr Sinclair | 33 secss |

Flying was curtailed on the Sunday when Mr Littlejohn crashed on take-off causing damage to the fuselage and completely writing off the port wing. The pilot and Mr T. Graham received minor head injuries and the aircraft was taken to the rented workshop in Stirling for repairs, estimated at around £20.

The club seemed to have been fairly ambitious in those early years and the cost of equipping it in line with their objectives was estimated at around £4000. Donations totalling £58 13s 6d had been

received, including £50 from Lord Weir. Representations for

changes to gliding subsidy rules were made to the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Swinton. Grant conditions were:

- Clubs to be Limited Companies.
- Clubs to hold lease of five years tenure of a soaring site.
- Clubs to be affiliated to the BGA and requiring a minimum of 25 members.
- Clubs to submit receipts for expenditure.
- Clubs to have BGA approval of site, ground engineer and flight instructor.

These conditions seemed to have spurred the club on and, on 27th July 1936, agreement was reached to register the SGU as a Limited Company. A suitable site was pursued with vigour and Gartcarron Hill near Fintry was secured for a five-year lease at £15 per annum. All was not good however. The BGA stated that the SGU did not yet merit a subsidy, as none of its members had gained their gliding certificates. A new set of conditions was negotiated which could result in a 50% subsidy to cover machines, ground improvements, land purchases, hangars and clubhouse. These were the same conditions as before but with the SGU proving that they had the ability to meet the other 50%.

Mr E.C. Gordon was elected honorary member of the SGU and was invited to represent the club at Board level of the BGA. Founder members of the SGU were invited to take out two £1 shares and pay a first Annual Subscription of £1 1s 0d. Ordinary members were offered a single £1 share and asked to pay a £3 3s 0d subscription. Twenty five members were needed to take up the capital offer which had been registered at £200. The landlord of the club workshop in Stirling was asked to defer rental payments until June 1937.

A meeting on 25th April 1937 agreed the appointment of Ada Dunlop as Flying Instructor and Reginald Brazier as Ground Engineer, with the flight instructor having seniority over the ground engineer. A committee was appointed to arrange the erection of a hangar at Gartcarron Hill. This consisted of T.

Graham, J. Campbell and D. Campbell, A. Aitken, K. Martin and W.R. Orme. A proposal was made that Johnny Gardner should attempt a demonstration soaring flight at Gartcarron Hill using the Campbell brothers "Hols der Teufel" sailplane.

At around this time, another band of gliding enthusiasts was looking to quench its thirst for flying. On Monday 12th July, at 7:30 p.m., the inaugural meeting of the Fifeshire Gliding Club (FGC) took place in the Rialto Tea Room in Kirkcaldy. By the 24th September the FGC had been established with Andrew J. Thorburn, Henry W. Thorburn, Alex M. Aitken, R.S. Miller, Andrew B. Rutherford and William Neith holding office. Their early training flights had been attempted in a field near Kirkcaldy but operations were soon moved to West Feal Farm on the Lomond Hills. The owners, Mr and Mrs Nicol, were very enthusiastic and supportive even going as far as allowing their farmhouse to be used for meetings and meals. Towards the end of the year, office bearers from the SGU and the FGC met in Central Hall in Glasgow and agreed to consider the merger of these two clubs as part of the Limited Company. Following the resignation of Johnny Gardner as Secretary, a provisional Board of Directors was elected.

