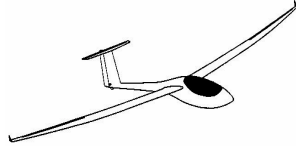


From the home of the *Scottish Gliding Union*

Portmoak Press

Editorial – Ian Easson

Welcome to another year and let's look forward to great flying days ahead.



Last issue I was suggesting that the shorter days would be a good time to get all those check flights out of the way. I booked some time off early January and planned for my annual checks. During the whole week, I only managed two very short flights. Problems ranged from constant canopy misting – despite rotating the glider this way and that every 20 minutes to soak up the weak rays of the sun – to a waterlogged airfield that, in effect, rendered it unusable. With a whole week off and no flying to be had, I turned my efforts towards “the book” and am pleased to report that I have completed the chapters up to the end of the eighties. This had been a big hurdle for me as the material for that decade was very thin on the ground. So, now that I am about to start the nineties, a new plea for all Portmoakians to check out their log books and consider putting pen to paper to record in history those special flights. I have just heard that Helen Evans is turning off her laptop and will be finishing her stint as editor of the S&G. When she finally takes off her editor's hat (a sun-visor thing with a strap around her head) she will have been responsible for 50 issues! I know how hard it is to publish a tiny mag like *Portmoak Press* but the internationally read S&G – wow, and well done Helen. We hope to see you at Portmoak sometime.

Last issue I was warning everyone to be aware of the thieves – stole my camera and gliding kit from my car. That was nothing compared to the ***** who stole the EB28 before Christmas. You may have seen the story already but in case you haven't...

Glider and trailer stolen, parked up in open ground, fuselage removed

and then cut in half! They removed the cockpit and engine section! Dumped everything else back in the trailer and abandoned it! How safe is your glider in its trailer? When did you last check the wheel clamps and/or padlocks?

In this issue, Frank Smith tells us about his trip to Greece and his amazement at finding a Greek glider pilot who had flown out of Portmoak and Peter Clayton describes part one of the Walking on Air trip to Switzerland last Easter – the reconnoitre. I have not replicated the duty roster in this issue as it is now an established on-line system. If, however, non computer users in the member community would still prefer to see the list published here, please let me know.

Finally, the usual plea for 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 March for April, end of June for July, end of September for October and end of December for January. 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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Board Members

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Treasurer	Kevin Hook
Technical & W.O.A.	Joe Fisher
Publicity & P.R.	John Guy
Membership Communications	Kate Byrne
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Club News

Sadly, Tim Barnard died in late December. He was the former CFI of Strathaven and also a well known BGA inspector.

Bob Petrie

A number of members have formed a group with a view to building another hangar in the same style as our "new hangar". Around twenty syndicate members have already pledged monies and proposals are being drafted.

Hope you all had a merry Christmas. The next radio class leading to a CAA radio licence will be held on Saturday the 9th February 2008 in the Briefing Room at Portmoak Airfield, starting at 09:00 hours. Colin Rodgers will provide course notes and tuition will be given throughout the day along with the written examination paper. In the past Colin has then gone through the verbal examination for those with the stimina and has arranged a date with those who have had enough for one day. The fee is £150, payable to Colin on the day, and includes course notes, tuition and examination fees.

If you are interested then contact me at

douglas.tait@btinternet.com

Douglas Tait

Changes to Booked Flying

Feedback from members indicates that booked flying is a very popular service, but the latest arrangements have not proved ideal and the Board is proposing some changes.

For those learning to glide, a combination of flying practice and ground briefing is needed, and we aim to provide that within the booked slots. More experienced pilots may only require flying time. The other consideration is that the club needs to cover the cost of providing a professional instructor, and it is only fair that this cost is largely borne by the users of the service.

With these factors in mind the following arrangements will be implemented from Monday 24th December 2007. We will continue to monitor the system and will always welcome feedback.

- Booked Flying will revert to half-day sessions from April to September.
- Outwith that period, during the shorter daylight hours, three bookings will be taken for each day (2 during Nov - Feb).
- The booked flying fee will revert to £15 (or thereabouts - see below):
- Booking fee of £7.50 payable by students attending for flying and/or ground school.
- Launch and Flying Fee surcharge of 15% payable on all flights with the professional instructor - this is expected to average £7.50 for a full session, thus making £15 in total.
- No booking fee will be payable if the student attends (or makes contact) and agrees with the instructor that the weather is unflyable and no ground school would be productive.
- Booking Fee of £15 will be chargeable in the event of cancellation by the student (or no-show).
- Students are expected to attend for the whole session in order to allow them to work together as a team and achieve the maximum flying from the day. A team is needed to achieve launching and retrieving.
- When a booking is made for motor glider exercises, the booking fee will be £25 and no flying surcharge will apply. This is necessary because the club is unable to cover any costs from flying fees, which are paid directly to the Falke syndicate.



Questions and Answers

What if it's unflyable?

- Ground briefings will be organised by the professional instructor during unflyable weather. Anyone learning to glide needs to learn theory to help them progress faster. If no flying is possible the fee will be £7.50.

What if I don't need any ground school?

- If it's unflyable, and you make contact with the instructor and agree with him that briefings would not be useful, then no fee will be levied. If you don't make contact the full £15 fee will be charged - the weather may be different at the club from where you are and the club is having to pay the instructor to hang around waiting for you. If you mutually agree to scrub he can get on with other work.

What if the professional instructor happens to be free and I just need a check flight or something similar?

- A 15% surcharge on normal club launch and flying fees will apply. It makes sense to accommodate ad hoc requests when possible, but while the instructor is flying he can't be doing other things, and the costs of employing him still have to be covered.

Have You Got Your Priorities Right

In 2007 Margaret and I again took our Motorhome south during the summer months. Being away from the first week of May through to the middle of July. Our destination - Greece. This would be our fourth time of visiting that country with our wagon. That was going to be a seriously long time away from the gliding scene. However there was going to be a chance of taking to the skies both in Northern Italy and Greece. Margaret does most of the planning on these trips and taking pity on me had somehow come up with a couple of gliding clubs which we could visit and fitted into our itinerary. Clever girl, always



pays to keep the driver happy.

By now we're quite conversant with the journey down through Northern Europe travelling on the Superfast ferry from Rosyth to Zeebrugge thus saving the long journey down to the south coast and crossing the channel from Dover.

From the Belgium port it's a drive of nine hundred miles or so to the Italian town of Ancona, which is a busy terminus for ferries sailing to the Greek mainland. We were disembarking at Igouminitsa a fairly large town opposite the Island of Corfu. After a two night stopover to relax, we then journeyed northwards away from the main tourist trail to visit the Prespa Lakes.

Anyone interested in bird life should visit this part of the world. The sight of White Pelicans rising slowly on early morning thermals is absolute magic. We were wild camping just below the small village of Psarades right by the lakeside. The locals made us very welcome, helps a lot when your missus speaks the lingo.

From there we journeyed eastwards passing through the Town of Florina and on towards Edessa. Now as far as I know there are only two gliding clubs in Greece, one is to the north of Athens. I've looked and failed to find it, but that's another tale. The other is located somewhere in the mountainous area close to the border with Macedonia and near a small village named Panagitsa. How near we didn't know. First objective was to find the village, which meant leaving the main highway and heading for the high ground. Spotting a group of folk by the roadside Margaret headed off to ask directions in her fluent Greek only to discover they were all Bulgarians. Anyway we finally reached the village only to find that some fool had allotted European Funding to the place and they had used the money to tear up the road and put down pedestrian type blocking from top to bottom. It looked lovely but there was a weight restriction in place, which ruled out 'Molly' motorhome from proceeding any further. By now it was getting late in the day with the clouds lowering over the high ground in front of us, when to our

surprise out of the clag overhead appeared a glider. After a couple of

turns it headed away back into the murk. With any enthusiasm for flying having long disappeared we returned to the main road and continued on with the holiday, part of which involved staying at a campsite below Mount Olympus for several days enjoying BBQ's and swimming in the Med. Towards the end of our time there Margaret suggested that we really ought to have persevered and found the gliding club. She's a pretty tenacious and determined character my lass.

So we backtracked, found a route round the village of Panagitsa and came upon the airfield. Margaret had come up with a telephone number from somewhere and we were granted permission to park on site. Nobody was about so we parked the wagon under the shade of some plane trees (no pun intended) and sat on a seat with our evening drinks overlooking a lake to the south.

The airfield was perched on a hillside with the ground to the south falling away through Cherry orchards down to the lake. Immediately to the north the ground rose up sharply to mountain ridges and the nearby border with Macedonia. We arrived on a Friday. On the Saturday nobody turned up, so we amused ourselves cycling locally. Sunday dawned sunny and bright and while we were having breakfast several cars arrived. We discovered that all of these folk were into parascending and later I watched them launching from a point high up on the mountain behind us, having been taken up by car which laboriously had crawled up a rough track.

A few more cars had arrived by now and now there seemed to be activity centred on a hanger which opened out onto a large concrete apron. Sure enough these were the gliding fraternity and they were soon pushing out a two seater Grob.

I just hung back while the instructor launched into his briefing for the day, which unfortunately I didn't understand a word of. Afterwards he came across to me and using what little Greek I know I tried to introduce myself. But joy of joys he spoke very good English. When I mentioned we were from Scotland and I also was a glider pilot, he just said one word -

'Portmoak'. How amazing can you get? His name was Petros

and years previously had studied Marine Engineering at Strathclyde University. While in Scotland he'd flown at Portmoak with a number of our instructors.

What followed was a marvellous day spent with the members of that club. Most of them spoke some English and we were able to chat together. Nearly all the flights were training ones with Petros in the back seat. Towards the end of the day we flew together with him generously letting me do all the flying from the back seat. Though we didn't soar on our two flights it was a great feeling to be airborne in another country. The Grob we were flying had been donated by the Greek Air force and still had the roundels on the fuselage, there was a second aircraft in the hangar along with some private single seaters.

It had been a long and hot day but immensely satisfying. The first beer of the evening hardly touched the sides.

The rest of the holiday in Greece went very smoothly and soon it was time to retrace our steps to the port of Igoumenitsa for the return ferry trip to Ancona. Next part of the holiday would be spent at the village of Valnontey which lay high up in the Italian Grand Paradiso National Park in the Northwest of the country. This meant motoring through to Aosta town and taking the winding road snaking up into the mountains from the valley floor. Aosta was the locality of the second of the two gliding clubs Margaret had located and I knew that as we ascended the road leading to Valnontey there would be no gliding for awhile.

As we climbed ever higher, with the chances of gliding once more growing dimmer by the minute, I did to my shame show my displeasure. Not for long though and we enjoyed an incredible few days amid the mountains, walking through high meadows bedecked with vibrant coloured wild flowers.

On our first night there I said to Margaret as the sun dipped down below the mountains, gosh it feels chilly. Checking on my GPS I discovered that we were at 1674 metres. The temperature when we left

Greece was in the high thirties centigrade.



Now it was time to drop back down to the Aosta valley and hopefully find a place to camp with the motorhome and locate the gliding club. We were lucky with both our quests. Firstly Aosta town had an area specifically set aside for motorhomes and then we found out that the gliding club operated out from the municipal airport some ten minutes drive away. First call then, obviously the airport, prioritise, that's the name of the game (and article).

Found the airfield and then the clubs office which was housed in the airports main buildings. The office was run by a very pleasant Italian lady named Henrica who fortunately spoke very good English. She spent ages on the phone ringing round various members, to see if any of the ones who also spoke English, would be available to fly with me the next day. Seeing that she wasn't having much luck I eventually suggested that we should come back tomorrow.

Leaving the airport we made our way to our overnight parking in the centre of Aosta which was quite handy. For the rest of the day we explored the ancient walled city.

The weather on the following day was set fair as we motored through to the airfield. We'd made an early start as we had to leave the area by 1.30pm at the latest to be at our next campsite at 6.00pm. Had Henrica found a suitable pilot, or in fact any pilot? Bless her heart she had, and Margaret and myself waited in the airport's café with a coffee till he arrived. His name was Alex and after a few pleasantries we left Margaret slurping away and passed through security and on to the hangars. Alex explained that we would be flying in a K21, but I would have to fly in the back seat as he wasn't an instructor. Of course all of that suited me just fine, just like the old days. He quickly carried out the DI and then the glider was towed round the peri-track ready for a launch by aero tow. I should explain that this is the main Municipal Airport for the area and there are commercial flights during the day. We would be taking off on their main runway. There were two other single seaters before us, then it was our turn.

Nobody on the wingtip here, Alex

levelled the wings using prop wash and we were off. We must have seemed so small and insignificant to any onlookers as we bowled along the wide strip of tarmac compared to the usual transport using the field. The airport at Aosta is set on the valley floor which runs roughly east - west, on both sides the mountains rear up to snow covered peaks. This was the setting as we climbed steadily away till eventually Alex pulled the bung, found some rising air and handed over control to me.

What followed was a fascinating and exhilarating flight. We continued to climb away from the valley floor in good thermal lift and gradually gained enough height to fly over the first of the ridges projecting out from the higher ground. Alex pointed out various refuge huts that were used by mountaineers doing it the hard way. Our way I think is the better.

I'd mentioned that we had visited Valnontey, the village high up in the Grand Paradiso National Park and beyond the charming Swiss like town of Cogne. So with Alex pointing the way we flew over ridges with jagged rocks never too far away, which had me concentrating rather, and then suddenly the ground dropped away and we were looking down from a great height on Cogne itself and there was Valnontey set in the next valley with the snowcapped Grand Paradiso mountain itself beyond as a back drop. This was gliding at its most magnificent, at times like this you wish that you could be sharing the fantastic spectacle with others. From our vantage point I could see the road we had driven down the previous day, snaking its way to the valley floor, like a ribbon twisting and turning as it descended through the mountain pass.

I'd taken my video camera with me on this flight and handing over to Alex I managed to get some useful shots. Time now was pressing and it was reluctantly that I told Alex we should be heading for home. As we circled down with full airbrakes we had a radio call from one of the two pilots who had launched earlier, it was to say he was in wave and climbing hard, looking up and far above we could

see his machine on the front edge of the bar.



What a flight, what an experience. Back on the ground I only had time for a hurried thanks to Alex and Henrica for their efforts in enabling me to fly, and then it was time to go. Later, Margaret leaned across and said to me - have you come down yet, I replied, no not really.

Frank Smith

Walking on Air visit to Switzerland – Part 1

The saga began in 2006 when Walking on Air received an email (in excellent English) from a 15 year old girl in Switzerland, Sarah Ramseier, saying that, as part of a school project, she was organising an event to promote flying for disabled people in both gliders and powered aircraft at the Gruyere Aero Club.

This seemed to be a little ambitious, but we soon found that it was serious. Sarah had the support of her father, Daniel, a pilot and member of the Gruyere club, and had also obtained sponsorship from the Swiss Tourist Agency and from Breitling (who sponsored the round the world balloon flight by Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones and other flying events). She told us that all the expenses of a visit by three of our disabled pilots and their helpers, except air fares to Geneva, would be covered by the sponsors.

This was clearly too good an offer to turn down, so the board to Walking on Air selected Steve Derwin, David Tuttle and Rab Mitchell for the visit from a list of keen volunteers!

It was also decided that Bob Petrie and myself would carry out an advance visit to check everything out, especially the disabled facilities, at Easter 2007. This article briefly describes the advance visit and it is planned that the three pilots who followed in the Summer will describe their experiences in the next issue of the Portmoak Press.

Bob and myself plus wives (both confusingly named Pat whose linguistic skills proved very useful) flew Easyjet to Geneva on Easter Friday and were met by Sarah and her father and taken to an hotel in Chateau-d'Oex, a village in the Alps which is a centre for hot air ballooning

(and where the round the world flight started). The following day a trip by cable car into the Alps had been organised, followed by a dinner hosted by Breitling at which the balloonist Brian Jones was the very interesting guest of honour.

On the Sunday we were taken on a 2 hour "tourist" power flight in the Alps in a Robin. The weather was very clear and sunny, so we had fabulous views as we flew around the Matterhorn, over the North face of the Eiger and other mountains. With four of us in a little Robin it was quite a long struggle to get to 4,000 metres!

Easter Monday was the highlight of the visit as we were taken for flights in a DG505, towed by the Robin to about 1,000 metres and released into the thermals. The P1, Michel Barras, first flew with Bob who took a video film of his flight which went over the Alps as far as Lake Geneva and the city of Montreux before returning to Gruyere. Gruyere is a single runway grass airfield squeezed into the hills, with the chateau dominating the airfield on top of a hill – the approach used is to fly past the chateau on your right, then turn left onto base leg and finals, avoiding power lines and an unfenced public road which crosses the end of the landing strip. All the aircraft at the club are equipped with Flarm units, which are programmed to include hazards such as power lines.

I had the next flight with very strong thermals over the mountains up to cloud base at 3,000 metres. It was disconcerting to have to avoid hang gliders (also equipped with Flarm) at that altitude about to vanish into the clouds – we did not follow them! There was little wind so Michel was happy to let me fly close to the mountain tops and through narrow gaps over mountain saddles. Great fun!

After an hour of this, still at cloudbase, Michel said that he wanted us to take the glider to a gliding club at Bellechase, 45km to the north on the edge of the Jura mountains, near the French border, as the DG505 was needed there for an aerobatic training week. After leaving the Alps in still air in the late afternoon it was a straight glide over the flat central

part of Switzerland past Freiburg to Bellechase where we arrived



overhead still at 1,000 metres, so flew onto the edge of the Jura to use up height. On landing at Bellechase (www.sg-freiburg.ch) Michel switched from French to German as he and Peter were welcomed with bottles of beer by the very friendly president of the club, Marcus Gnagi. We then watched another DG505 performing very impressive aerobatics – including inverted turns and bunts – whilst waiting for the Robin to arrive to ferry us back to Gruyere. The Gruyere club (www.gruyere.aero) is very friendly and informal, with light power aircraft of all types flying in from Switzerland, France and Germany. Sadly, they say that they rarely see aircraft from the UK. There is a very good restaurant on site and they make every effort to keep on friendly terms with the local people, to the extent that they have a small zoo next to the restaurant to keep children occupied. Power aircraft and gliders are well integrated, with the gliders each being lifted up into the hangar roof by electric winches over the power aircraft to save space.

What an experience! Bob and I are very grateful to Sarah and the generous members of the Gruyere Aero Club for a fantastic experience. Steve, Rab and David, who followed us later, take up the story in the next issue.

Peter Clayton

Duty Roster System

As a lot of you will already know the club have introduced a new online system (DutyMan) for managing the weekend duty roster. In order for this system to work efficiently it requires each member, who is currently on the Duty Instructor/Pilot rota, to have a valid email address. Therefore if you haven't already supplied the club with a valid email address can you please email me at <mailto:sgcrosters@dsl.pipex.com> and I'll update your details.

Those of you who have already submitted a valid email address will have received a Welcome email from DutyMan with login details and instructions on how to use the system. If you have any questions please speak to me in person or send an email to <mailto:sgcrosters@dsl.pipex.com>.

Also, as well as using the new system to request duty swaps, could you please also use it to confirm that you are available to do the duty allocated to you.

Vic Leitch

Please check the online Duty rota to see whether you have a duty. I have tried to take account of known preferences for Saturdays or Sundays. The feedback from Duty Supervisors is that Duty Pilots are sometimes not turning up. This leads to slower launch rates and slower retrieves, and everybody loses out. Please, please, if you find that you are not available, arrange a swap with someone else. Phone numbers and email addresses are available in the Members' Directory.

Alec Stevenson

