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The Scottish Gliding Union, an amalgamation of a number of small, local gliding clubs, was established as a limited company in 1938, the year of the first soaring flights from the Lomond Hills in Fife.

By the outbreak of war, the club had established a headquarters at East Feal farm, near Leslie, consisting of a clubroom, hangar and dormitory, and was operating holiday courses for the public. This location was no longer available after the war, so operations recommenced at Balado airfield, Kinross, in 1946.

A further move became necessary in 1957, when Balado returned to military use, so the SGU purchased a narrow strip of land at Portmoak farm, near Scotlandwell. A hangar and a new clubhouse were erected, and the new location proved to be highly successful. The opportunity to purchase the remainder of Portmoak farm was taken in 1967, providing the club with a large grass airfield, within easy reach of the soaring slopes of both Bishop and Benarty hills, a combination which is unique in the UK and ideal for training.

The area has also proved suitable for advanced cross-country flying, with many visitors from other parts of the UK visiting each year to sample the local conditions. Flights from Portmoak have ended as far away as Ireland and the South coast of England, while the UK single seater height record of 36,100 feet, set at Portmoak in 1980, stood for over fifteen years.

The club holds a significant number of UK records for speed and distance and the site is nationally recognised as one of the premier soaring centres in the United Kingdom.

During the last ten years, significant improvement to facilities has continued and the club is maintaining a healthy membership. It is now better known as the Scottish Gliding Centre (SGC).

Bruce Marshall

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