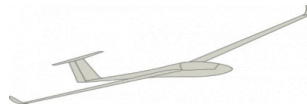


# On Circuit!



The Newsletter of Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club  
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## In this packed winter edition of On Circuit!

- Colin Downes – Volunteer Parachute Maker (This page)
- Building for the Future – Make sure you read this! (P. 3)
- Flying in Florida by Vernon Bettle (P. 5)
- Revival of the Inter-Club League (P.7)
- ESGC Achievements 2012 (P. 8)
- New DVLA Towing Regulations (P. 8)
- ESGC Christmas Party and Pics (P. 9)
- Committee Posts – Message from Paul Foulger – Secretary (P. 10)



### Colin Downes - Volunteer Parachute Maker

#### **Colin Downes – Winch Cable Parachute Maker and Weak Link repairs**

On Circuit asked Club Member and Pilot Colin Downes about how he makes and repairs the winch cable parachutes.

OC Colin, how did you get into making the parachutes for the winch cable?

CD When the club used to get the parachutes repaired it used to cost £25 per repair and over several years the costs mount up for the club. The club used to have to send them off to a sail maker for repair. I thought I had the skills to do it for the club and save the club a lot of money so I offered to do

the repairs if the club bought a suitable electric sewing machine. For brand new parachutes it used to cost £800 for a box of five. You can imagine it was costing a lot.

OC So the club bought a machine for you to use for the repairs?



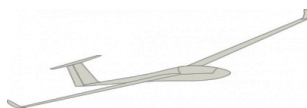
**Colin Downes**

CD I sourced the right kind of machine but the club paid for it. It was originally in the workshop but I had to get it moved as the dust from the grinding wheel got inside the motor and other parts of the sewing machine and messed it up. I had to take it for repair and the fellow said to me that he'd never seen anything like it.

OC So when was this?

CD Oh, it was a while ago now – it was before we had the retrieve winch. I used to make the 'chutes for that too. Then we went on to Dyneema from steel and I had to experiment with the size of the 'chutes, altering the design. As Dyneema is so much lighter you don't need such a large

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size of 'chute as you do with steel. It's also to do with the extra spring in the steel too. The 'chutes I make now last a lot longer than when we had steel. We've got some even cheaper material now to make them out of which Graham Wright sourced so it's costing the club next to nothing.

OC Have you been approached by other clubs?

CD Other clubs have asked me but I'd rather not spend too much time on this as I want to be flying. I built up a stock for our club by working solidly on it and then that meant I didn't always have to come back and make more all the time. I've started on making the wind socks too which also saves the club quite a bit of money.

OC So where did you get the skills for this sort of work then Colin?

CD Originally I trained as a tailor in Saville Row but that was a long time ago. That's how I got the skills. My fingers are like a bunch of bananas now but I'm ok for doing machining.



**Saville Row where the best English tailors practice their art and...**

### Colin Downes' left hand



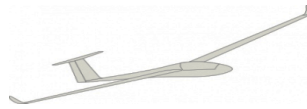
OC So how do you know when the 'chutes are working well or when to alter the design?

CD I get feedback from the winch drivers. Sometimes it can be quite funny though. I was at the launch point one day helping to launch gliders and the 'chute had got a bit tangled up so I was sorting it out. One of the club members came over and told me I had got it inside out. I told him he was wrong and that I was turning it the right way out and he got really bossy and told me I was doing it all wrong and that I ought to listen to him as he knew what he was talking about. I enjoyed telling him he didn't know f... all and that as I had made it I probably know which way they go!

OC It must be quite a difficult and dirty job when you have to repair the 'chutes and it's been covered in mud?

CD It is really dirty sometimes but the worst was when they used to spray chicken manure on the field and the cable and 'chute were winched in over that lot ... I'd get covered in it! Then we had a non-flying member, Frank Fear, nice old boy, used to help by cleaning them off for me so

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that it wasn't such a mucky job.  
Now I do the weak links too.

In fact I'm responsible for everything between the end of the Dyneema to the glider. When I took on the weak links too that was when I came off of the winch rota.

OC Weak links are expensive aren't they?

CD Not half! They cost a fortune at around £70 each.



That's because they are solid forged rather than joined. I'd like everyone to make sure that each day of flying the weak link is checked before every launch. If the little hole in the middle is starting to stretch and elongate then put that link in the weak link bin in the launch vehicle as it's on the way to letting go. It's dangerous and also very expensive when we lose several on one day's launching. If they let go at low altitude the pilots have not got much time to react and if they let go at the top it could land on the winch one day.

OC Colin, I'm sure Club Members will be grateful for all your work on the 'chutes, wind socks and weak links

behind the scenes to help keep us flying. Hopefully they'll stop arguing with you about which way the 'chutes are supposed to go when they've read this. Thanks for talking to "On Circuit."

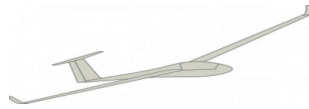


**Building for the Future - The voice of Club Members in shaping the future of ESGC.** Make sure you attend the AGM Saturday 23 March 2013 19.05pm

The ESGC Committee are keen to engage the Club Members in an on-going dialogue about the kinds of things the membership would like to see happening and the way you see the club developing in the future. There are some interesting projects and potential facilities which the Committee are considering and the Committee need to know what the views of the membership are. These are significant potential opportunities and may require significant financial investment by the club so it is really important that the views and opinions of the Club Membership are taken into account before going ahead. It is your Club and the membership voice needs to be heard.

In particular there are a number of projects to be scoped out and evaluated to see if they are something the membership would want and would value.

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Three key projects are under consideration at present. These are:

1. **A Series of Training/Briefing Packages** and appropriate PowerPoint and screen facilities for those bad weather days. The basic idea is that when people turn up to fly but the weather is poor, rather than waste the journey or the time, an illustrated briefing or talk is given by one of the Instructors. After an hour or two briefing on a flying topic the weather might start improving anyway and if not it would be a positive and constructive flying related activity to help generate and retain motivation. Graham Wright – Club Chairman is sponsoring this project and is keen to get your views and ideas about how to make this work. Graham can be emailed on [chairman@esgc.co.uk](mailto:chairman@esgc.co.uk) or, you can respond to the thread on the Burble Room or, why not just be old fashioned and speak to Graham when you next see him at the Club!
2. **Flight Simulator** – The Committee have been discussing whether a flight simulator would be a useful asset for the Club to invest in especially as the global climate seems to be changing and there have been less and less good flying days over the last three soaring seasons. A simulator could be another good training tool as well as an alternative on bad weather days to help generate attendance and motivation. However, if the club is to invest in this we need to be sure that it is something which the membership would want and would use. We know that some other clubs are building

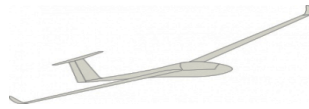
these or already have them in use. A volunteer is needed to carry out some background research on this, to provide a focal point for the membership to feedback to and also to champion this as a project if it gets the go-ahead.

3. **Additional Member Hangar Space** – The Committee have also been discussing whether it would be worth investing in some additional hangar space so that members could leave their private gliders rigged and ready to go. There are a number of financial and planning questions to be answered here: How much would it cost the club to build? Is it something enough members would want to make it viable? How much would it cost for a member to keep a rigged glider in this space etc.? Again, a volunteer is needed to carry out some background research on this and also to provide a focal point for the membership to feedback to.

These ideas and any others which come from the membership will be discussed at the AGM on Saturday evening 23 March 2013. Apart from being a good social event it is imperative that as many members as possible attend the AGM so that the membership can make their voice heard. Just two volunteers are needed to champion these projects and it would be great if this was led by a member of the club who is not also a Committee member.

See you there!

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## Flying in Florida by Vernon Bettle

The Florida sun was warm on my back as we parked the Mustang convertible and strolled into Disney. My 8-year-old son tugged at my elbow, almost incoherent with excitement. "Dad, Dad, Splash Mountain!" He and the rest of the family had been here last year while I visited my brother in Canada and I knew their game: find a ride with big drops, rapid acceleration and plenty of water to frighten father.

A decade on, that little boy is now taller than me, but the game remained the same. However, I had the advantage of being accustomed to aerial manoeuvres from learning to fly since the previous visit, which might let me hold my own against the offspring. Old age and treachery overcomes youth and skill, they say. My son was soon about to start university, my daughter just about to go up for her second year and I had had some hopes of leaving them at home while my wife and I went for a romantic walking holiday in the country. Perhaps along the Cotswold edge near Nympsfield, on the North Yorkshire moors around Sutton Bank, or in the Black Mountains. You get the picture. No chance: the family want to go back to Florida and you **will** enjoy it.

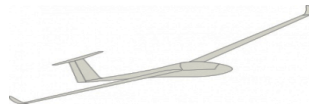


### **Vernon Bettle flies a Ventus out of (and most times back to) Wormingford**

I turned the little red Chevy off Interstate 4, along the 27 then onto the imaginatively named Country Road 474. Not a Chevy to take to the levee this, unless you wanted to push it down the bank into the river, this was a Korean built, retro van-styled thing suitable for Postman Pat's American cousin. It droned feebly through countryside flat even by East Anglian standards with areas of swampy, scrubby woodland and small fields with scraggy, bored looking cattle. I passed some mineral workings as I followed the directions for the airfield, passed Alligator Road and turned down South Fork Ranch Road through some trees. It looked an unlikely spot for any sort of airfield but I drove down the track onto an expanse of that very green, oddly (to northern eyes) wide leafed grass which was Seminole-Lake gliderport.

I drove past a few battered glider trailers and parked near the colonial styled bungalow which seemed to be the centre of operations. Inside, a man who had been

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cutting the grass on a tractor confirmed that I was expected and that my instructor was in the air with a pupil. I sat down on the low chairs and the other occupant, a smartly turned out elderly lady said hello. In that charmingly polite yet open American way, she explained she was waiting for her husband who was in the air. He had held every type of licence he could as a younger man in the military, but had never flown gliders and his children had arranged him a trial lesson for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had taken to it, and they were driving from Port Canaveral on the Atlantic coast several days each week. She told me how his father had been a motor mechanic pre WWII, and had enlisted hoping to fly; but on asking his civilian occupation, the recruiting sergeant had instead told him he now was an aircraft mechanic. His son, her husband, had bought a piper cub post war and his father had looked at it and immediately announced it needed an engine rebuild, which he undertook. Her first date involved landing in a field near a garage to refuel. At the time, she had taken this as normal aviation practice.

The intrepid aviator duly returned and I was driven over to the glider by the CFI, Steve, a fit looking man with cropped, ex-military hair in his 60s. I wasn't sure what sort of glider to expect. I was in fact presented with a Grob 3, the same as we have at Wormingford, but with a very faded chalky finish from the Florida sun, and no electrics at all. We had no chutes

due to weight considerations: although I noticed that all the weight and speed limits on the placard had been greatly lowered.

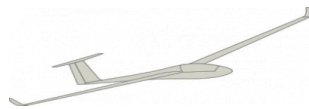


### **Grob 3 at Seminole Lake Gliderport**

Without a wing runner or radio, I gave hand signals to the tug pilot, started with the starboard tip on the ground and full left aileron as instructed, and off we went. To my surprise, we didn't cartwheel, the wing lifted easily and we climbed bumpily away over the trees. Below us as we climbed out, the options for a cable break looked as limited as I'd guessed. The day had started blue, and now at 11am conditions looked quite good although with a fairly low cloud base and a forecast of thundery showers in the afternoon.

I pulled off at 2500ft and after a bit of fumbling, found lift and climbed away. Thermals were strong, but the sink was too and cloud base rose to 3500ft max. Steve told me that conditions were often best in the winter with clearer, drier air and bases to 6000ft. We didn't always agree where the lift should be: the clouds seemed to be favouring the English opinion that day.

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Cross country flying didn't seem big locally and I could sense unease behind me as I followed a line of energy upwind of the airfield. Looking around, pointed out a very blue, butterfly shaped lake in the mineral workings just to the east of the site as a navigational aid. There were birds everywhere; I counted 12 buzzards in one thermal.

I experienced a problem I hadn't met before: as I flew from the relatively cool dry air in the blue into the warm moist air of thermals under the clouds, the canopy misted up – on the outside.



**Butterfly Shaped Lake**

After an hour or so I landed, a slightly higher approach speed than suggested to allow for turbulence over the trees and down onto the emerald green Florida grass. Type fixation from flying the Ventus I know, but it was a big strip with no one else flying and it was indeed bumpy on approach. Back in the clubhouse we chatted. Steve turned out to be a keen and knowledgeable soccer fan, watching the premier league on cable TV. He feels the

Spanish league is better but not now included in his cable package! Gliding, certainly in Florida, seems to be entirely commercial without the club structure and low costs we have. The aerotow, the hire of the glider and instructor and a tee shirt came to about \$170 from memory. This does put into perspective how good and cost effective the UK system is.

And the rollercoasters? No problem- father survived them all. Sheikra at Busch Gardens in Tampa was intimidating, but I enjoyed Cheetah – rather like a winch launch but no chance of getting it wrong. How dull!



### **Revival of the Interclub League for the 2013 Soaring Season**

Dave Aherne and George Green have been instrumental in reviving interest in the regional inter-club league.

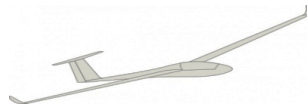
The idea is that each club hosts one cross country competition over one weekend during the soaring season. The participating clubs then put together a team comprising of novice, improver, and experienced cross country pilots.

So far the two dates confirmed for this year's ICL are:

- Tibenham 4th & 5th (6th if needed) May
- Woringford 27th & 28th July

Rattlesden and Wattisham are yet to confirm the dates they will host a competition weekend.

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Paul Gould, the overall competition organiser will have updates from these and other clubs in due course.

If you are interested in taking part or in helping with the organisation especially for when ESGC are the hosts in July then please contact either Dave Aherne or George Green for more details.



## ESGC Achievements 2012

“On Circuit” thought it was worth reflecting on the achievements of the members and the club over the last year or so and noting them so we don’t forget what it’s all about. The list below is drawn from the “Burple Room” recent achievements thread and so may not be exhaustive. Apologies to anyone who has achieved something notable and who is not mentioned below.

### **First Solo**

*Spencer Fitch* - January  
*Graham Banning* - April  
*Jack Wade* - May  
*Clive “Gosling” Stacey* - May  
*Ben Durack* - August  
*Bradley Soanes* - Aged 15 youngest ever at ESGC - October  
*Andrew Coleman* - September  
*Mike Burcher* - November

### **Bronze**

*Jaques Loyez* - Bronze Badge completed  
*Dave Davies* - Bronze Exam passed

### **Silver**

*Ken Ward* - Silver duration flight (5hrs)  
May  
*Dave Wallis* - Silver Badge Completed July

*Mark Butcher* - 100km diploma including Silver height and distance

*Adrian Tills* - Silver Badge Completed August

*Bruce Grain* - Silver 5 hour duration September

### **Olympic Medals**

*Rob Locket* - Wenlock Olympics - Silver Medal (Below right)



### **New Assistant Category Instructors**

*Dave Aherne*  
*Dick Skinner*

### **New Full Category Instructor**

*Eddie Leach*

As if all this were not enough the Club has been awarded Junior Gliding Centre status and successfully applied for and has been given a grant of £10,000 by Sport England. Well done to Graham, the Committee, the Winch Crew and the Instructors.

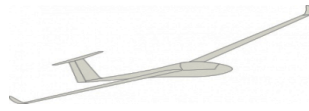


## New DVLA Rules for Driving Licences: Towing Trailers

The DVLA are introducing new driving licence entitlements from 19 January 2013. Due to these changes, it is essential that all retrieve drivers and towing glider pilots



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familiarise themselves with the category of vehicle they are entitled to drive on their DVLA driving licence.

Licence holders who passed their test before January 1997 keep their existing entitlements and retain Category C1 + E and D1 + E. In effect this means no change for those in this situation.

There are changes for licence holders passing their test after January 1997 and up until Saturday, 19 January 2013.

Those with Category B entitlements on their licence will only be permitted to drive:

- Vehicles up to 3500kg (MAM) towing a trailer up to 750kg (MAM) - a combination of 4250kg in total; or
- A trailer over 750 kg as long as it is no more than the unladen or kerb weight of the vehicle and the combined total doesn't exceed 3500kg



### **Dave Aherne and Bradley Soanes on retrieve from Elmsett last autumn**

Licence holders who pass their test on or after 19 January 2013

The Category B entitlement will change and will only allow them to drive:

- Vehicles up to 3500kg, towing small trailers no more than 750 kg; or
- A trailer over 750 kg as long as it is no more than the unladen or kerb weight of the vehicle and the combined total doesn't exceed 3500kg



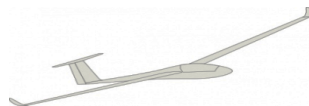
### **Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club Christmas Dinner**

Jeanette Wright has been organising the ESGC Club Christmas Dinner for the last two years now and has done such a great job she's been asked to do it again this year.

According to Jeanette, "We decided to organise a Christmas Meal for E & SGC and having scouted around I went to The Thatchers, [Pub] in Mount Bures and booked 20 places initially. After I had put the menu choices on the board at the Club and members had booked a meal it amounted to 60+ reservations. I went back to see Mitch at The Thatchers and changed over to the dining room to accommodate everyone as there was such a good response. Everyone agreed it was a good menu choice, good meals provided and friendly atmosphere to enjoy a social time together which is not always easy on Club days! As it had gone so well and had proved so popular I was asked to organise it again for Christmas 2012."

"In September 2012 another menu was put on the board and once again 60+ members and partners came along on 16 December."

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Jeanette also explained how she had coped with the organisation of it all, "From the spread sheets of co-coordinating 158 courses and ensuring each person had what they had requested it ensured a good evening was had by all."

"We hope to do it again for Christmas 2013 and all Club Members, partners and family are welcome."

Jeanette has kindly supplied some photographs of the more civilised part of the event for "On Circuit", before the drink had really set in. Unfortunately the pictures from later on that night cannot be published for legal reasons...



Good to see that at least one medic was on hand...



Cheers All!



Where are Dave's and Colin's party hats?



## Committee Posts at E&SGC

Message from Paul Foulger - Secretary E&SGC.

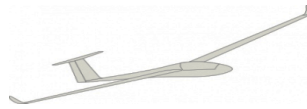
Have you ever thought you would like to join the Committee and take part in the running of your gliding club??

Posts will soon be coming up for election and we would be pleased to hear from anyone who would be interested in taking on a post and would like to know more



Some determined Christmas revellers...

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about what the job involves.

For your information the nominated elected posts are:

- Chairman
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Membership Secretary
- Site Officer
- Technical Officer
- Winchmaster

The posts of Chief Flying Instructor and Safety Officer are posts that are recommendations of the Committee.

If anyone has an interest in a nominated post please contact me as soon as possible, when I can give more information.

Paul Foulger - Secretary  
Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club Ltd  
Tel: 01245 224 374  
Mobile: 07885 678 927  
Email: paul.foulger@btinternet.com



## **Contributing articles, pictures and copy to "On Circuit!"**

Contributions of articles, pictures and copy for publication are welcome and should be sent to Adrian Tills at:  
adrian.tills@googlemail.com

A very big thank you to all of the contributors to this edition.



## **Committee & AGM Dates for 2012**

### **- 2013**

Members may wish to make note of the forthcoming dates for Committee Meetings and the 2013 AGM.

Wednesday - 27th February 2013

SATURDAY - AGM 23rd MARCH 2013

Wednesday - 17th April 2013

(N.B. All committee meetings commence at 19.05 hours -Unless otherwise notified.)



**Safe Flying Everyone!**