

The Story

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Bob Adams

Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club

The Story

As told by Bob Adams



The Author toasts the President, Eric Richards, on his 80th Birthday 1997.

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Chapter 1. Founding Father

In the local paper, "Essex County Standard" of 5th August 1960, Tony Sutton describes Wing Commander Percy Hatfield as "Father of the Gliding Club".

Percy Hatfield had a extraordinary wartime flying career, as his medals confirm. I choose only one illustrative incident in 1941 when he was ordered to 'Find the Bismark' in his Catalina flying boat. At midnight, his crew spotted a huge naval force, so he sought cloud cover and took the Catalina in for a closer identification. On breaking cover, he was immediately above Germany's most powerful battleship and was met by a barrage of multi-coloured tracer. He took violent evasive action that threw the aircraft's fitter out of the rest bunk, which was just as well, as bullet holes appeared along the full length of the bunk. Hatfield got clear to relay confirmation of the sighting from a shadowing position and waited until the Royal Navy arrived to commence its final epic duel. The Bismark had been



sunk by the time Percy alighted back in Scotland after flying 27 hours, an endurance record to this day for a Catalina and crew. He flew anti-submarine patrols, VIP flights to Russia, survived 240 operational sorties, test flew 16 types of flying boats and floatplane Spitfires. Throughout his 20 years in the RAF he flew over 5000 hours taking every opportunity to fly almost every type of flying boat in addition to fighters and the early jets.

Percy had gained his gliding certificate in 1946 when still in the RAF. This original certificate is displayed with other archives in the clubhouse.

FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE
INTERNATIONALE

BRITISH EMPIRE

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, RECOGNISED BY
THE FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE INTER-
NATIONALE AS THE SPORTING AUTHORITY
IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE, CERTIFY THAT

Percy Robert Hatfield

BORN ON *20 January 1916*

AT *Leicester*

HAVING FULFILLED ALL THE CONDITIONS
STIPULATED BY THE FÉDÉRATION AÉRO-
NAUTIQUE INTERNATIONALE HAS BEEN
GRANTED A

GLIDING CERTIFICATE

NO. *4948*
THE ROYAL AERO CLUB

Marjorie of Tara

PRESIDENT

119 PICCADILLY
LONDON, W.1

GLIDING CERTIFICATES

THE HOLDER HAS QUALIFIED FOR THE
FOLLOWING CERTIFICATES:

A. CERTIFICATE

DATE *15 May 1946*

ROYAL AERO CLUB

R. Preston

SECRETARY

B. CERTIFICATE

DATE *15 May 1946*

ROYAL AERO CLUB

R. Preston

SECRETARY

C. CERTIFICATE

DATE
ROYAL AERO CLUB

SECRETARY



PHOTOGRAPH OF HOLDER



P. R. Hatfield

SIGNATURE OF HOLDER

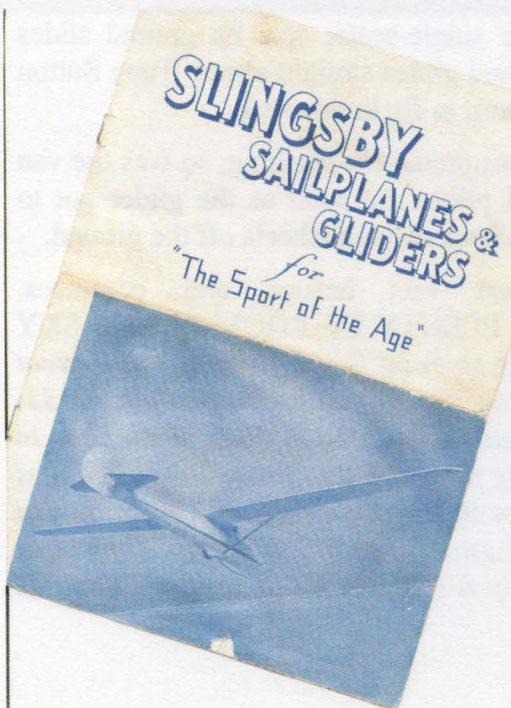


It was no surprise that within a month of his last RAF flight he was airborne again having started a crop spraying company, Airspray Ltd, with a Tiger Moth from Boxted in 1958.

It was to Boxted and Percy Hatfield that Tony Sutton and John Francis came looking for a gliding site.

Percy asked them where they were going to get a glider and how much more cash they needed. They only had £80 between them. "Give that to me" said Percy and in return gave them a cheque for the full cost of a glider and told them to go get a British Slingsby Cadet. That was within 5 minutes of their first meeting.

A 1946 catalogue cover and Cadet description is shown, and by 1960 the price would have risen considerably.



The Kirby Cadet The original Kirby Cadet was designed to meet the demand for a robust club type training machine to fill the gap between the Maudslayi Primary and the intermediate Sailplane.

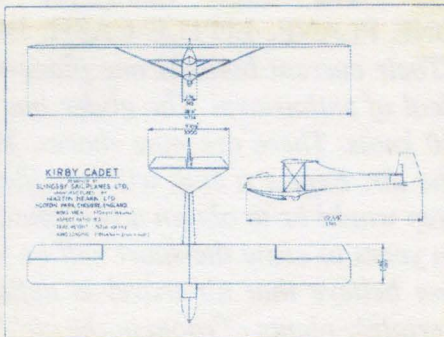
The aim was to construct a machine of low cost and of the utmost simplicity, so that repairs and replacements could be carried out by semi-skilled club members with limited workshop facilities.

A two-spar wing with diagonal stiffeners and braced by faired tubular steel wing struts was chosen as the easiest form of construction. The fuselage and tail units also were designed for robust simplicity rather than appearance.

Because of its high lift at low speeds and gentle stalling characteristics, as well as its suitability for two-spar construction, Aerofoil Section Gert. 426 was selected as the most suitable for this particular type.

During the last few years this machine has been in extensive use by the Air Training Corps and has been progressively modified and improved. As a result the 1946 Kirby Cadet, with its wing loading of 2.8 lbs. per sq. foot and aspect ratio of 8.5, is highly satisfactory for instruction in circuits and soaring. For those who prefer this type of ab initio training this machine is without equal. Gliding Angle, 1 in 16; Sinking Speed at 32 m.p.h., 3.5 f.p.s.

Price £295



Percy Hatfield enthusiastically supported them and housed their pride and joy, a single-seater silver and red Cadet glider, in one of his hangars.

The idea of gliding had come from John Fisher, a pilot with 9 years power flying experience, and Tony Sutton, a racing motorcyclist with none whatsoever. Launching was by wire behind one of Tony's vans, a Ford Prefect with side windows. Of the other original members, only Lionel Collins (tallest in photo) and John Osborne had any flying experience. Also in the photo are Vic Chilvers (2nd left), Harry Chilvers and John Fernley. Geoff Stacey, Percy's ground engineer may also have been a member.



Training of new pilots on the single-seater was by ground slides followed by successively higher hops and glides straight ahead. Tony Sutton was the only person to persevere and learn to fly in this way.

Just as the single-seater was unsuitable for teaching, so was the van impractical for launching experienced pilots. As soon as the glider got to even a modest height, it lifted the van's back driving wheels off the ground.

The 1960 newspaper report was headed and continues, ONE PLANE, LITTLE CASH, BUT PLENTY OF ROOM IN THE SKY *"Their current boast is one plane-wing span 39 feet, no money and a great deal of enthusiasm. The glider has a top speed of 62 knots, best gliding 35-40 knots. There are nine shares. The pilots, ages 16 to 60 have all been in the air. Expect a club will be officially formed in the near future. The next step would be to obtain a two-seater for instruction purposes. Confident that in years to come the sport will be well established in Colchester. Tony says, 'we believe that air travel is definitely a thing of the future, and there is certainly plenty of room in the air'."*

Seen behind another of Tony Sutton's vans and the landing Cadet is the Dolly onto which the glider was lifted to tow it back to the launch point.



A member who didn't attend often, Jim Appleby, had a heavy landing in the Cadet. He went through the seat leaving him with splintered plywood in his bottom. He had to drop his trousers for members to remove the splinters and were left with a written off glider.

When they told Percy that the club was finished, he asked "Why?"

"No money, it wasn't insured" they said.

"Don't worry" said Percy "You didn't know but I personally insured it for you".

Percy only flew it once, a perfect launch, a perfect circuit, a perfect landing.

Tragically, Percy Hatfield was killed on a crop-spraying sortie in 1965.

Chapter 2. Gliding Groups

On the fold of the 1963 Airmap, Boxted is seen four miles North of Colchester, as one of a number of disused airfields.



Boxted had been the American wartime fighter base of the famous 56th fighter group. The photo with the farm worker and his son at Boxted watching a Marauder is one of the well-known images of the war.



'When they did see action, they coped incredibly well . . . they became the top-scoring American squadron ever, shooting down 300 aircraft between them.'





The picture of the intersection of the runways shows it nearly at the end of its life, the last remaining buildings being used by non-flying firms.



As well as Percy Hatfield running his crop spraying company "Airspray Ltd", the machine tool company, "Woods of Colchester" based its business planes, a Beechcraft Travelair, a de-Havilland Dove and the Aero Commander, shown here, at Boxted.

The owner, Geoffrey Woods, also bought Wormingford Airfield, another Essex wartime airfield, six miles away. So, when harvesting was taking place at Boxted, the Group was able to fly from Wormingford. Later, Wormingford was to play a vital role in the history of the Club

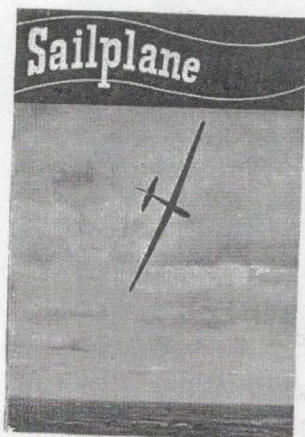
After reading the newspaper article, John Thurlow who had been through an advanced gliding course with ATC Gliding School Martlesham Heath, immediately joined the Group. Eric Richards joined soon after, guiding the club into the next millennium, eventually as President.

Originally the launching method used a nylon rope behind members' cars and vans, which got the glider up to 500 feet in a good wind. In September 1960 they progressed to launching with piano wire, buying an old Jaguar to use as a tow car, increasing launch heights in the Cadet to 800 feet.

They were enthusiastic flyers. After flying late into the evening, they would tow the glider to the hangar and if the driver went fast enough and slowed down gently, would fly the glider back on a rope no longer than 20 feet!

A contribution to the Sailplane & Gliding magazine in 1961 mentions eight 'bods' from the Group on their first expedition to RAF Swanton Morley.

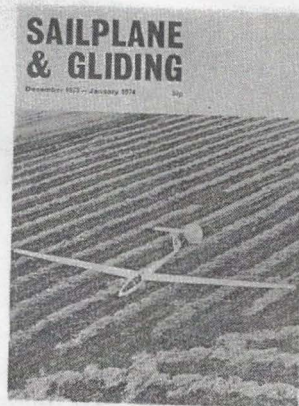
The early little magazines, of half the size of the present Sailplane &



The first S & G

FAREWELL POCKET SIZE S & G

ALAN YATES



Gliding are a good source of club history. Reports of a 'C' badge or a 'Silver C' occur in the magazines of the time. An "A" badge was for a solo flight of at least 200 feet and successful landing straight ahead, successful being defined as no damage incurred. A "B" pilot had to demonstrate a turn to the left and a turn to the right. A "C" badge was awarded for a sustained flight of five minutes, which excluded launch and glide down. A dramatic jump without any subsequent instruction was the 'Silver C' badge qualification. This was almost identical with today's requirements of a 5-hour duration flight, a 1000 metre climb and a 50km distance and would have been much less easily attainable in the comparatively poor performance gliders then available.



With the insurance money from the crashed Cadet and increased contributions from the members a Tutor was purchased. This glider had better ailerons and thus was significantly easier to fly. The Tutor VM653 is shown with Eric Richards and his son Russell, years later also to become an instructor, in the cockpit. The Auster G-AHAP in the background belonged to Colchester and North Essex Flying Club and being underpowered was never a tow aircraft. However, Percy Hatfield allowed C&NEEFC qualified



members to aerotow in his own Tiger Moth G-AIRK. To economise on fuel and on engine time, the pilots would cut the engine on rollout after landing and sometimes even before landing. Rather than taxi the machine, members would walk the Tiger back with its tail up. Of course most trainee glider pilots were restricted to auto-tow in the single-seater Tutor. Tony Sutton was the only member to convert to aero-tow in the Tutor without any two-seater instruction.

It was clear that a two-seater glider was required. So the Group sold the Tutor to buy a Ka7 from John Adams and Arthur Clarke who had been flying it from Martlesham Heath. Both John and Arthur joined 'The Colchester Gliding Group' as it called itself. It was also necessary to become officially recognised as a Club under the British Gliding Association (the BGA) for training. Trevor Ware, Geoffrey Woods' company pilot, ex RAF and RAF Gliding Sailplane Association, became Chief Flying Instructor and cleared Eric Richards and John Thurlow to instruct.

Peter Wilby had independently formed a flying group called "The Suffolk Gliding Group" based at another wartime Suffolk airfield just North of Ipswich, at Debach, pronounced 'dee-bitch'. Before finishing National Service, Peter had heard of a sale of RAF gliders – a hangar full of Tutors, Cadets, T31s, T21s and others. He and a friend put in a tender for a Tutor with all the money they had. Having made it look as unattractive as possible to others by kicking a hole in the rudder and removing the variometer, the bid of £50 was accepted. So, when they returned to Civvy Street, they had their own glider. They launched it at Debach with an Austin A40 pickup truck and a solid cable. The political feeling at that time was that flying should be encouraged in case there should ever be another 'Battle of Britain'. So a tax rebate was available on petrol for flying. A launch was costed at one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) and still made a profit.



Rarely did more than four of the six members of the Suffolk Group turn up. However, even cross-countries with retrieves were achieved with only two people on the site, the pilot and ground crewman. The system was as follows. A temporary castor wheel was fixed into the wing tip resting on the ground, but would fall out when the wing went up. The wire between the car and glider would have the slack taken up before the pilot got in. When the pilot was ready he would wave to the driver and off they went. The castor supported the wing by rolling along the runway until the wing came up off the ground and the castor wheel fell out. If the launch was successful, the driver had to retrieve the tow wire and castor and watch for a sign that the pilot was setting off cross-country. The signal was two stalls in succession, whereupon he would hitch up the trailer and, without radio, follow the glider by eye wherever it went. In 4 successive days in August 58 they retrieved from near-by Ashlacton, Cretingham near Beccles, Caistor-by-the-Sea and Shipmeadow.

Like the Colchester Group, the Suffolk Group needed a two-seater for training, as inexperienced pilots damaged the Tutor too often. So in 1963, Peter Wilby flew from Boxted with Eric Richards in the Ka7, with the possibility of an amalgamation in mind. However, the sight of the Tiger cutting its engine and being hauled back to the launch to save fuel and

engine hours gave Peter little confidence in the viability of the Group. On take-off in the K7, the slipstream from Percy's Tiger Moth blew back a cloud of pebbles from the deteriorating Boxted runways. These flying stones not only obscured the forward vision from the cockpit but also seemed decidedly dangerous. So he took his precious repaired Tutor complete with the logo to join the RAF Wattisham Gliding Sailplane Association as a civilian. There, many years later, he met up with Eric again. Later Peter joined and Eric rejoined the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club.



Geoffrey Woods wanted Wormingford to become Colchester's commercial airport to accommodate planes such as his de-Havilland Dove, shown here at Boxted. A Public Enquiry in 1966 was convened to decide which wartime airfield of either Boxted or Wormingford should be returned to agriculture and which should be retained for flying. By this time both airfields' runways were already being demolished for hard core.

The Enquiry recommended that Boxted should close and be returned to farmland. Only non-commercial flying facilities were granted to Wormingford. To safeguard Wormingford airfield from becoming a commercial airport, the Inquiry Inspector ruled that continued use of the Wormingford control tower should not be permitted. So in a fit of pique Geoffrey Woods closed that airfield completely.

Eric pleaded with Geoffrey Woods at least to allow gliding at Wormingford, to no avail.

So the search was on for a new site.

Chapter 3. Marshall's

Eric Richards and John Thurlow had both already visited and flown with the Cambridge University Gliding Club at Marshall's Airfield, east of Cambridge, in 1962. In 1963, they took the newly acquired K7 there, using both Percy's and the CUGC Tiger Moths as tugs. The Cambridge Club's Instructors, flying from the back of the K7, found the restricted visibility a surprise after their own open-cockpit side-by-side T21 training glider and some 'interesting' landings occurred.



With the deteriorating runways and imminent closure of Boxted, the Club moved to Marshall's Airfield in September 1963, sharing facilities with Cambridge for a year.

Once, from there, Eric Richards landed out in a glider, not far away at Ridgewell, another disused wartime airfield. Almost simultaneously, a twin-engine plane from Europe landed, having mistaken it for Marshall's. Eric thought this was a heaven sent opportunity of getting a lift back to Marshall's instead of phoning. So Eric suggested to the pilot that he should

accompany him as navigator to Marshall's, to which the pilot readily agreed having made the initial error. A few days later, Eric received a summons from Customs, reminding him of the serious offences he had committed in not only authorising this plane to take off from its first landfall without being cleared by customs, but assisting the offence as well.

Marshall's was a large active airport with commercial flying, so the weekend glider club training didn't fit easily into their operation. It had no cross-runway as seen in the photo. The Tiger Moth was a hand-full to turn on the hard runway without a tail wheel. The technique was to turn the plane with full rudder and blip the throttle. Too little and it would not go round. Too much and it would go past the line up direction and one had to repeat it. As Eric related, once after he did three pirouettes, a Captain in a waiting Airliner radio-ed "May I have the next dance?" Clearly this airport was not conducive to mixed flying and the search was on again for a new site and their own tug plane.

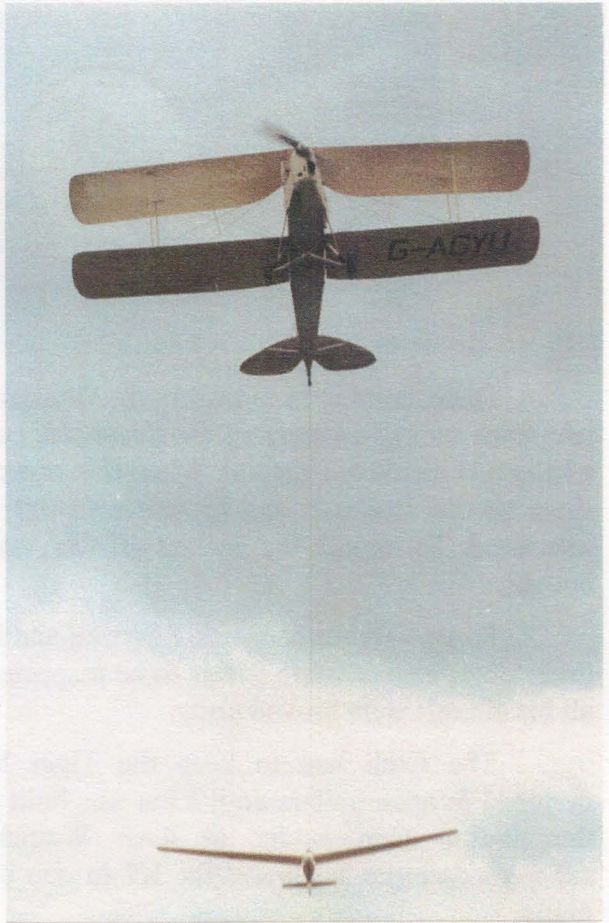
Chapter 4. Whatfield

In 1964, Eric made contact with a farmer, Mr Sonny Waller who had a 450-yard North/South airstrip for his own private plane, a Miles Magister. Mr Waller was buying a twin-engine Miles Gemini, so needed a longer strip. He did this by extending the existing taxi strip beyond the North/South runway to form a new 650-yard East/West runway.

Initially Sonny let the Club fly from the site for free as long as he liked us. He said that he wanted to be able to get rid of the Club if he so wished. The site was at Whatfield in Suffolk, and the Club was renamed the Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club.

Within a year the club had 40 members, 4 instructors, 7 tug pilots of whom 5 were glider pilots, the K7, an Olympia 460, and a very nice ex-naval Tiger Moth.

At that time planning permission was not required, but later that year the law was changed. The exact date of the first flight was later to become critically important as to whether the Club had 'Established Use' planning permission. The K7 was aerotowed in to Whatfield using the CUGC Tiger on 12th September 1964 where it did nine launches. At a later Planning Enquiry it was ruled that the new extension to the main runway had not been used before the 1964 defining date, which was always a worry should the authorities try to shut the club down.



Eric and John Thurlow boxed and coxed as CFI and Chief Tug Pilot roles over the years. Eric diplomatically made the landlord, Sonny Waller, President of the Club. He would also smooth over objectors by promoting them to Vice-president, of whom there were several.

Peter Brown & Ron Crissell joined in 1968, after spotting a glider on tow over Hadleigh. After their first solo, with traditional beers all round at the 'Donkey' pub, the slang name for 'The White Horse', Eric would present them with a lapel badge. This consisted of ones 'Wings' and inset was the club emblem of a bird, the Colchester Raven. Members affectionately called it "The Crippled Crow".



Once, coming in to land in the Olympia, Eric touched the wing on the telephone wires just short of the threshold, catapulting the glider and him in a heap just inside the airfield. When this was reported to the local policeman, since no one was hurt and he was watching the FA Cup final, he was not interested. To replace the written off Oly, another single seater, a K6b was bought.

Sonny used to hangar his Gemini and later a bigger Cessna 175 in his grain store, except when it was to be inspected by the rating authority, when all his aircraft were moved away.

The Club had to keep the Tiger Moth outside and the gliders derigged in open trailers until a hut was built at the side. So Eric went to see the Station Commander at RAF Wattisham and persuaded him to accommodate the Tiger and the K7 in one of their big hangars seen in the photo.

The Senior Air Traffic Control Officer opposed this, laying down a joining procedure, which seemed dangerous to members and some believed indirectly caused Eric's bad accident there.

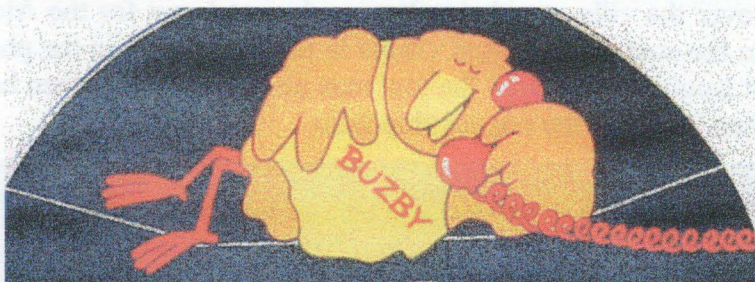
The procedure was for the tug and glider to tow towards Wattisham at no more than 200 feet, and then circle a local village called Nedging Tye until given a green light from the tower to land. Both pilots had to concentrate hard for the others' safety flying tightly and accurately at such low level over the village and simultaneously watch out for the Aldis lamp signal from the control tower just visible in the foreground in the photo. The glider pilot would release from the tow rope and climb away when he judged he could then land past the runway threshold.



Either glider pilot Tony Carter did not release or the rope snagged and pulled the tug's tail up to hit the ground nose first from 200 ft. The engine came back into the front cockpit. Eric, as normal in a Tiger Moth, was flying from the rear cockpit and had his leg, arm and face smashed. After months in hospital his determination enabled him to fly again.

Unlike the enormous Wormingford runway, Whatfield had a very short 450 yards North-South cross-runway and a main extended 650-yard runway narrowing down to 22 meters at one point as seen in the Chapter 12 photo. These provided good circuit and spot landing training. Telephone wires were a hazard on the usual westerly approach, and an even greater hazard on a takeoff uphill in the opposite direction. On a marginal day, your author was Aerotowing Peter Codd with a passenger in the 2 seater. The tug only just cleared the wires when a bow in the rope dropped onto the wires

but the combination scraped over without incident. At the time the wires brought the second glider pilot to the ground, British Telecom was featuring a bird in their advertising that was often depicted sitting on telephone wires called Buzby. It was inevitable that the pilot was nicknamed Buzby from then on.



Before your author became a member some interesting aircraft arrived on the site such as this triple rudder Miles Messenger.



He was also told tales of suspicious aircraft that had visited the site, such as a helicopter with the "Police" insignia covered over in emulsion paint and a camouflaged Auster. Some locals said the notorious London Kray gangster twins left the planes there. Certainly Ralph tells of a blousy lady who came to the site one day unsuitably over-dressed. When joking, he said to her "Give us a kiss, Darling" a voice, possibly a minder, told him that he had better "watch it". He ought to have known that she was Dolly, Reggie Kray's girl. Apparently, the police investigated the notorious 'body in a bag case' alleged to have been dumped into the Thames from a light aircraft, but found nothing. There were many such airstrips and it was impossible for the authorities to monitor them all. Sometimes reports circulated of night flying from the strip. A Cessna was reputedly seen with blow up dummy 'passengers' going out to Europe and coming back with real people, possibly the first illegal immigrants. When the club was active at the weekends there was none of this excitement, only rumour.

How much of this was fact we may never know. Never the less, a Bensen engineless autogyro was unofficially 'borrowed'. Unfortunately the photo omits the rotor blades.



It was necessary to get the blades spinning fast to get any lift so it could not be tried out at low speed. The other difficulty was that the pedals worked like a go-cart in the opposite sense to a glider. It was towed behind a car at a good speed but it was obvious to the onlookers who saw it weaving erratically from side to side that the glider pilot couldn't control it with the unnatural pedals and it was too unstable and dangerous.

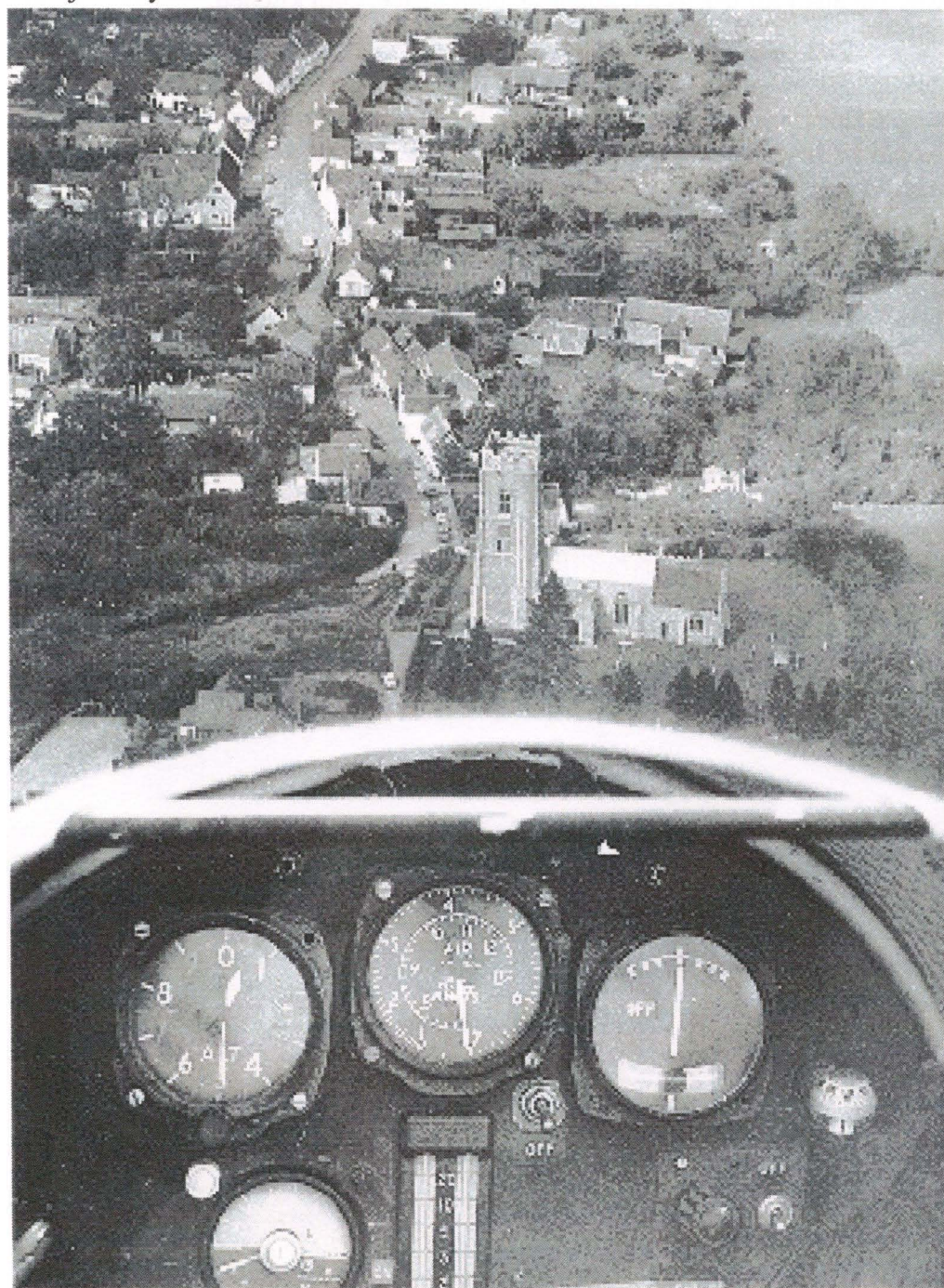
Open days were held on the field. The gliders were displayed at marker posts and aerobatic exhibitions given with the pilot's radio connected to a public address system. At that time joy rides were permissible too.



The site was in a beautiful part of the Suffolk countryside. A visibility check was customary and if Kersey Church, 3 miles away, was even only just visible, seen in the photo on the horizon above the glider on tow, it was defined as 'gin clear' and definitely flyable.



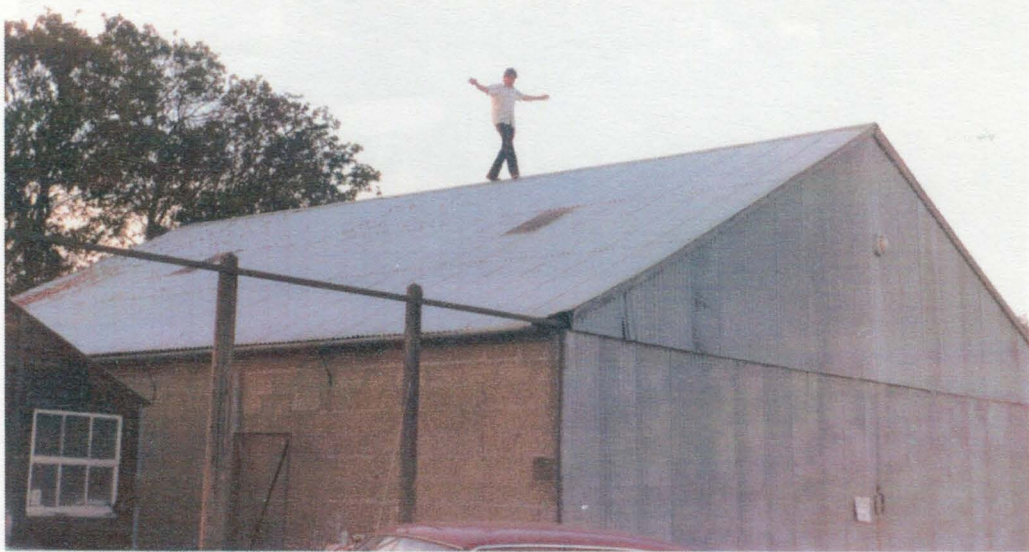
Now just beyond the horizon



Prior to 1973 there was no Clubhouse, so members were either on the field all day or working in the hangar in bad weather. Eventually, a caravan was obtained for use as a clubhouse, cum office, cum kitchen.

Eric attended a local Council meeting in 1978 to discuss the Club and the danger to traffic because of the entrance to the club track from the road where there was an awkward bend. The Council minutes record that road would be improved. It was completed in 1993, three years after the club had moved out.

Whatfield members were brought up to believe that a Chief Flying Instructor was a God who could fly without wings. CFI Wilby is shown about to prove it off the barn-cum-hangar roof.

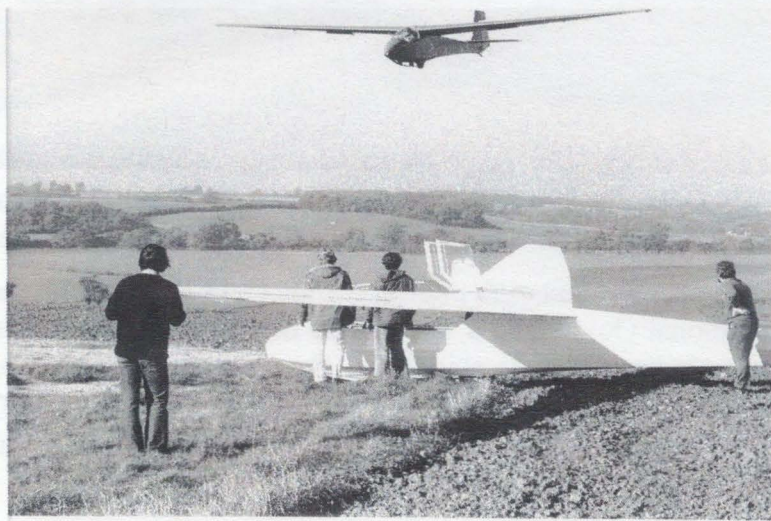


Chapter 5. Wooden Glider Era

The spirit of the time is represented by this lovely transparent structure, a Grunau Baby belonging to Ian Hodge.



An illustration reproduced in 'Sailplane & Gliding ' shows a typical early 70's scene of the syndicated Swallow and the club 2-seater.





Privately owned gliders were appearing on site, the first ones being a by now classic vintage Tutor above followed by an Oly2b, the Swallow and a Skylark 3 below.



By 1971 Gold distances of 300 kilometres were being attempted, Eric being the first successful pilot. This was an epic flight past Exeter in the Ka6.

Eric was also the first club pilot to get his Gold Height from the Club site, the international Gold being a 3000 metre height gain after release from tow. This too, must have been an epic flight. The only other pilot having done so since is Mark Mathieson. In East Anglia one is dependent entirely on thermals to create lift, so pilots will go to hill sites as related in Chapter 29 Expeditions.

Courses were being run at Ipswich Airport in 1972 and used for mid-week flying, the gliders being ferried over on tow.

Tony Wooff brought in the notoriously weak Oly 463 and the short-winged Vee-tailed BG135. Anne Winterbottom imported the Ka6 'Red Bear' from Germany and Mike Lee a Ka6e. Ralph Brooker spent a lot of time gaining his Airframe Inspector's Licence buying and rebuilding a Swallow that had been crashed so badly a number of times that Ralph says that he would never have taken it on if he had known how much effort it required.



Ralph worked on, and indeed rebuilt, many Club and syndicate gliders, including this Ka6.

Peter Brown and Mike Bailey bought a new Pirat from Poland. Peter Brown recalls that a lady who lived in house on base leg complained that gliders were flying right over her garden where she liked to sunbathe in the nude. Up till then no one had seen her as she was directly underneath, but her request was complied with to open the circuit and it was only then that she could be seen.

John Gilbert (Senior)'s flight in the wooden Olympia 2b had an epic ending for those of us who witnessed it from the ground. John was due back from an ambitious cross-country in his quite low performance 'Oly'. He had



been reported a long distance away and people started to congregate at the highest point at Whatfield near the windsock willing him back, as recorded in the historic photos, with CFI Angus apparently not daring to look. John was spotted some distance away, very low but flying at a steady and presumably optimum speed. As he gradually got nearer and nearer he appeared to sink into the valley below the level of the onlookers, who were cheering him to make it back. Just as we were about to say, "He's not going to get back to the threshold", he showed us his airbrakes as if to say "Don't worry, I've still some height to spare."



One of the strangest gliders was Ian Hodges' Fauvel, an old French tailless design. Theoretically, by eliminating the tailplane and fuselage, there is less drag. The local press came to see Ian's first flight in it from Whatfield and with a journalistic flair aptly named it 'Pterodactyl'. However, it was not easy to fly and Ian considered it a novelty.

August 17, 1968

'Pterodactyl' takes to the skies

The strange, tail-less glider gets a second lease of life

By Simon Barrett

IAN HODGES' unusual glider started about 100ft in the air.

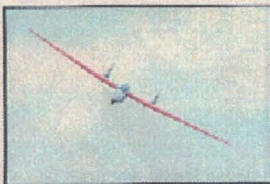
The tail box, "thingy" he is pointing to, the first time from Whatfield, seen (Hodges), this week has attracted a variety of descriptions, the best of which was from a local resident who said he was used to seeing gliders, but "that thing looks like a pterodactyl".

The glider is a flying dinosaur in more ways than one. It was built in 1957 in Germany in a pre-war design by the Frenchman Charles Fauvel and is the only surviving example of its type left in Britain.

For much of its life it was flown by stunt pilot Andy Gough, a flying instructor at RAF Leicester in Oxfordshire.

It became airborne as he looked the loop at air shows all over the country, but when he died in an accident in another glider the RAF lost interest and it lay in a barn for six years.

Because of its hot



Picture by John Kay

regulations — Ian Hodges admits it is difficult to fly — some gliding clubs refused to allow the Fauvel to be flown from their airfields.

However, when Ian bought it last Christmas he had no previous experience and his club, the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club, let him fly the odd hour once a week.

"We are all experienced pilots," said club president Paul Robinson. "Everyone knows each other's capabilities so we

were quite happy to let him fly it."

Ian took his first flight in the Fauvel this week after months spent overhauling it.

First he was taken up by Land Rover to make sure he had mastered the controls, before he had his first flight in the single-seater craft, dubbed the "bat" by pilots of more conventional gliders.

"There weren't many people who knew how to handle," he said. "I had

to find out for myself, but once I got it in the air I was on my own. I forgot about everything except flying it."

The controls of the Fauvel are very sensitive, but Ian, 32, who recently moved from Colchester in

Essex's Essex, has the eyesight to fly it.

He has been flying gliders for 12 years and is also a qualified aerobics instructor.

He does not plan to own

the 12,000 Fauvel yet — "I have no room for it in my garden," he said.

The strangely shaped Fauvel, which looks as if its backbone has been sawed off just behind the harness cockpit, does not need to be

submerged to take loads.

However, its strange design made its coming back into fashion — Ian says the Americans are now making gliders based on the flying wing design.



The Fauvel "flying wing", looking more like a Bumblebee than a glider, soaring high over Suffolk.

At the end of the wooden glider era 'Zip' Kruger-Gray photographed most of the fleet from the top of the site clubhouse. The first fibreglass machines might be identified in the photo.



Chapter 6. Tiger and Auster Tugs

After Eric's crash, an ex-Marshall's Tiger Moth G-AGYU had been bought. At Whatfield, Shell supplied the aviation fuel in 45 gallon drums, but when this service ceased, the members ferried in fuel in 5 gallon drums and pumped or lifted it up to the tug's tank. The Tiger Moth had its tank in the upper wing, which meant lifting the drum up high to refuel as seen here.

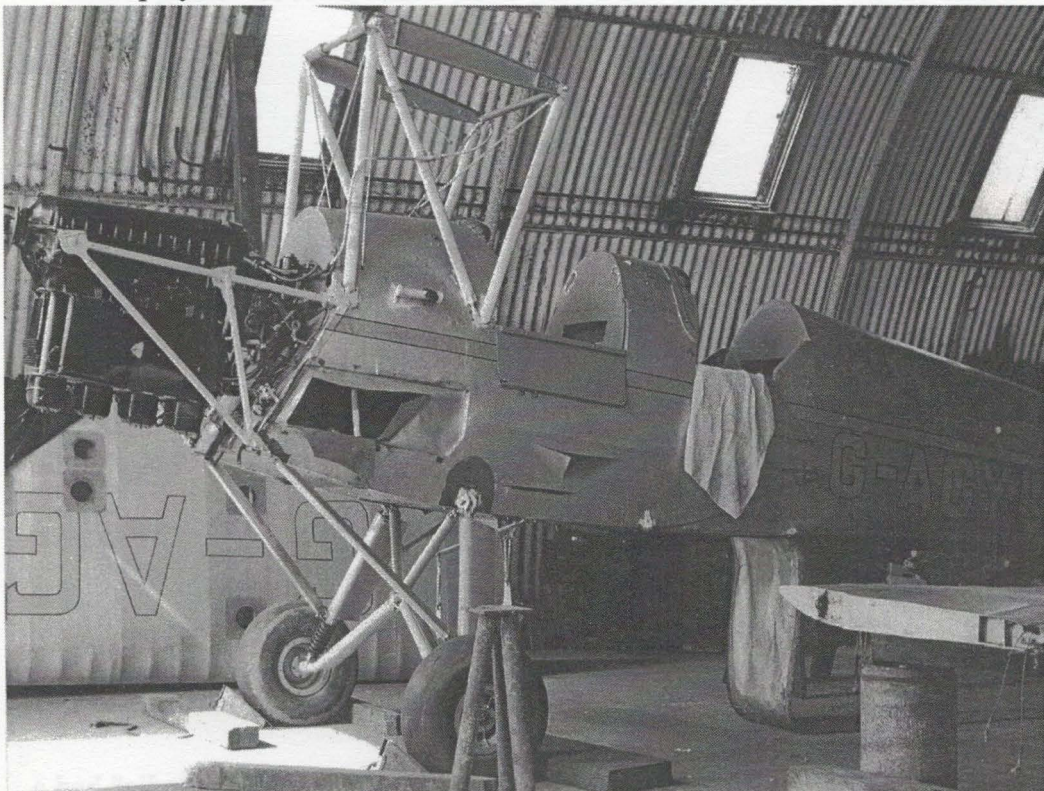


The various Austers that the Club either owned or had the loan of did good service and they were lovely looking machines as seen in the picture of "Hotel Tango". This Auster had a belly tank, which made refuelling easier.



They had had their share of incidents too. Auster "Juliet India" had a belly petrol tank, similar to "Hotel Tango". On one occasion having just got airborne towing a glider, the rope slackened and the glider pulled off. The tug attempted to turn back but clipped the crop and tipped upside down. The pilot, Doug Hayhurst, was suspended in his straps with petrol pouring over him from the belly tank, which was now above him. Club members Ron Crissell and Peter Wilby had to get under the machine to hold him up while his harness was undone, so he wouldn't break his neck if he fell straight down. Luckily, he was able to escape unharmed.

John Pickering, John Thurlow, Tony Sutton and Tommy Taylor refurbished the Tiger "Yankee Uniform" in the winter of 68/69 including a white respray.



Unfortunately, when the RAF needed their hangar space again, this Tiger had to stay outside at Whatfield and wintered at Ipswich, all of which did it no good. When the Civil Aviation Authority announced that all fabric covered aircraft would be required to have their wing fabric replaced periodically, they looked at the biplane and thought of the all work that they had already put in and decided to buy a monoplane to halve the work. They sold it for a knockdown £450 to a De Havilland collector.

Although no longer able to keep the tugs in the Wattisham hangar, the club was permitted to keep the Auster "HT" on the field at RAF Wattisham overnight for security. In return, the RAFGSA were invited to bring their gliders, a club Blanik and a Kestrel to fly with E&S for the annual flying week at Whatfield. Brian Scott, the tug pilot, swung his own prop having previously set throttle, unfortunately too fast. Although clinging on to the machine, he was unable to get in. The tug careered forward and the prop mangled up the RAF Kestrel.

Years after that, members joked that whenever the club wanted a flying week, the authorities at RAF Wattisham would not permit midweek flying in their Military Air Traffic Zone as they had arranged to play 'War Games'. In fact both clubs co-operated well, and it was NATO that decided the dates of any air exercises.

On the Saturday after one week of War exercises when the RAF Wattisham base had successfully fended off dozens of practise 'attacks', Neville Bleach landed his glider unnoticed at Wattisham. Temporarily having difficulty with walking, he deliberately landed on the apron under the Control Tower, which he climbed. He apologised for, as he said, "arriving like this". The Controller asked, "arriving like what?" "Landing here" and leaned over to point out his glider immediately below.

The photo shows "Yankee Uniform" about to touch down over "The Spot". There was a similar distinctive white chalk circle at each end of both Whatfield runways making good identifiers from the air.

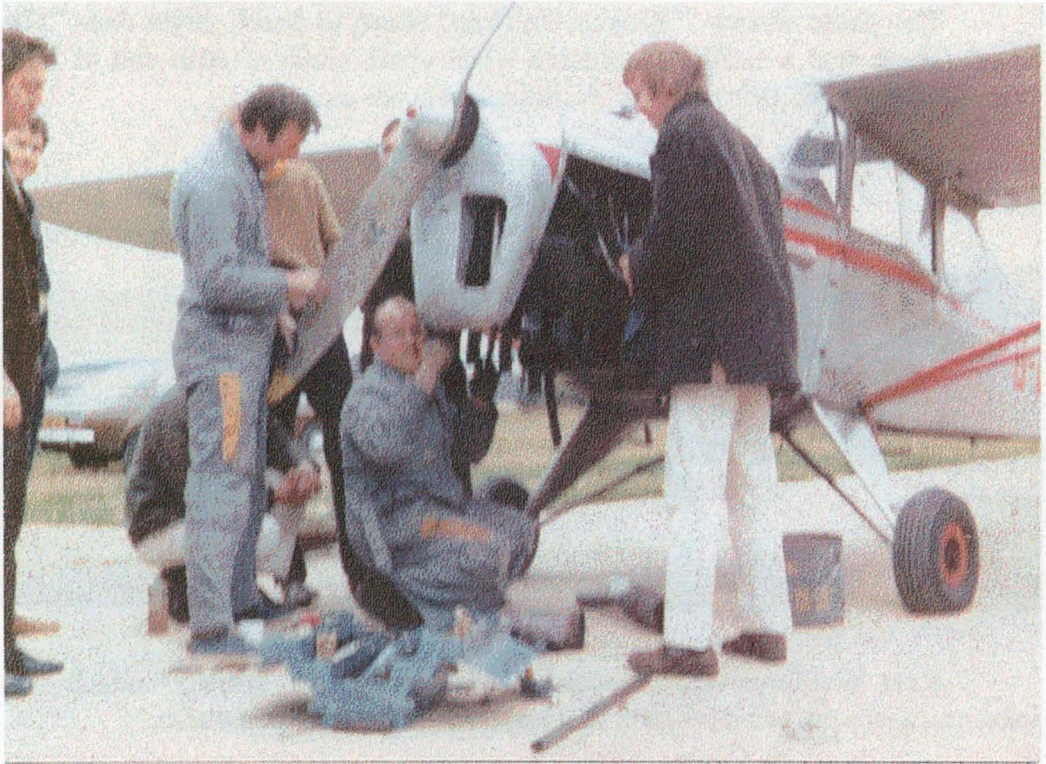


John Wallis privately bought an Auster, "Bravo Whisky" which was used as a spare tug but its engine was impossible to start when warm.

Once, Peter Brown was flying a passenger and, as usual, had just got the glider off the ground before the tug got airborne, when the new tug pilot had trouble with the throttle and aborted the launch. It managed to stop but the glider was committed to flying over its whirring propeller and stopped just ahead of it. All this was below the horizon from the club and therefore unseen. When the members rushed down to see why the planes had vanished, to their astonishment they found the glider ahead apparently ready to tow off the tug.

Ralph Brooker became the first Club Gliding Instructor from scratch and then tug pilot and eventually Chief Tug Pilot.

When Sonny was not using the barn for his plane, he let the Club hangar the tug in it when there was no grain being stored. However, grain was always an attraction to rats and mice. One day tug pilot, Ralph Brooker, had just started the engine for the first tow of the day, when to the onlookers amazement, he furiously shut down the engine and jumped out, attracting everyone's attention. As quick as lightening but to every one else's amusement a mouse ran down out of his trousers and scuttled away, to ribald remarks. The mouse had panicked when the engine started and ran up Ralph's trouser leg, which made Ralph panic, too.



Austers and Tigers had inverted engines. This meant removal of the exhaust and the oil sump to get at the cylinder head as Ralph is seen working on in this photo. After the Austers, as described in chapter 11, the replacement tugs would have horizontal cylinder Lycoming or Rolls Royce engines.

Chapter 7. Hurricane

A hurricane hit the site overnight in 1974. John Wallis had his personal Auster, which was fully picketed, lifted up and deposited on the Trailers holding the Skylark and the Pirat gliders.



In the foreground of this photo are the remains of the club caravan, a bare chassis. The superstructure had been ripped off and blown over the hangar roof.



At the adjoining Barrards Hall the owners looked out in the morning to find that their ducks from their lake had been sucked away and on looking closer, so too had all the water

In the Easter 1974 photo of the site prior to the hurricane, one can pick out the caravan next to the dutch barn and the adjacent 5 trailers onto which the Tug was dumped. In the middle distance, one field away, trees surround Barrards Hall.



Sailplane & Gliding reported it as follows.

ESSEX & SUFFOLK

One night in mid-December a squall line passed over our site at Whatfield; it completely destroyed a caravan on the site and lifted and carried John Wallis' Auster—Bravo Whisky—about 20yds depositing it on top of the trailers. Substantial damage was caused to the Skylark 3F and its trailer with minor damage to two other gliders and trailers. Wind speeds were recorded that night of nearly 80mph.



The dramatic results of the squall which hit the Essex & Suffolk Club.

Chapter 8. Whatfield Members



A couple of German fighter pilots from the war joined as members. The first told his war story as follows. *Peter Helmut Rix joined the massive glider training programme before enlisting in the Luftwaffe in 1943. By January 1944 he was flying multi-engine Ju88's and enjoying himself in Denmark where there was a still plentiful supply of the good things in life. There was a sudden reminder of the war when two RAF Mosquitos roared across his airfield at low level shooting up the facilities. He was converted to the Focke-Wulf single-engine fighter Fw 190, but it was not until March 1945 that he took off on his first and last operational sortie when he was shot down, managing to bail out with severe burns. He never flew again till he settled in England and joined E. & S. GC.*

Gerd Meier also was shot down by the RAF. All he would say was "Bloody Spitfires".

CFI Peter Wilby converted to power at Suffolk Aero Club with Peter Collier, its CFI. It had always been Peter's wish to get the record for sending someone solo in a glider in the shortest possible time (apart from the Wright brothers and Primaries). So, Peter Wilby gave Peter Collier one dual lesson and was happy to send him solo, successfully.

The cutting from Sailplane & Gliding below is self-explanatory. Another ten years later, John became a fully rated Instructor.



John Gilbert of Essex & Suffolk GC after his 16th birthday solo with his father, John Gilbert Snr, and Pete Wilby, his instructor, behind.



John Gilbert started gliding as a five year-old and was photographed in the K-7 with Pete Wilby, in 1981.



**Some 1985
members.
Paul Rice**

**Gary Blythe
Tony Brown**

**Steve Horning
David Odhams
John Thurlow**

**Peter Wilby
Noreen Friend**

**Kevin Rust
Clive Wilby
Vivien Haley
Jill Wilby**

**Joey
Alan Hall
Richard Harris**

**John Balance
Mike Bailey
Roy Everett
Nick Plummeridge**

**Kevin Balaam
John Atkins
Bob Adams
Paul Roberts
Sylvia Wilby
Martin Field**

Les Marshall

**Angus Macdonald
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Bob Adams
Paul Roberts
Sylvia Wilby
Martin Field

Les Marshall

Angus Macdonald
Neville Bleach
Peter Brown
Eric Richards

One of the lessons that instructors teach a glider pilot is the importance of knowing one's location. Asking the student in which direction is the airfield often does this. Eric did this to Jane early on in her training. When she landed, she confided to others that Eric couldn't see through his thick spectacles and had to ask her where was the airfield! So it was arranged that on her next instructional flight Eric would take her out to the glider tapping his way with a blind man's white stick. She took the hint, and went on to become a commercial pilot, as described in the "Daily Telegraph".

Hardlife

The airline pilot

How does a nurse turn into an airline captain? I was working in Bermuda when I decided nursing wasn't to be my long-term career. Flying – a hobby since I'd flown gliders in my teens – was growing on me and I gained my Private Pilot's Licence. Still nursing on my return to Britain, I squeezed in my instructor rating – a full-time one-month course which bumped up my flying hours – and took the flying exams through home study and a two-week residential crammer. When I qualified as a commercial pilot I had enough hours to get a job with an airline. I didn't fly jets until I joined Airtours in 1994.

Do you get taken for a stewardess? Yes, when I'm off duty. If I say, 'I fly', people assume I am cabin crew and I leave it at that. It's a compliment as, generally, they are young and attractive. I try not to say what I do until I know someone better; some men may be overawed and it alters their perception of you. In truth I get a bit embarrassed by the fuss people make as I do a job I love and get paid for it.

Describe a long-haul day. A cup of tea and I'm out of the door at 9.30am. I must be at the airport one-and-a-half hours before take-off so for, say Cancun in Mexico, I'm in for 10am. I am handed a flight plan which is entered into the aircraft's navigation computer. With my first officer, I check the weather and any NOTAMs, or Notices to Airmen, which warn of any changes to procedure en route. I introduce myself to the nine-strong cabin crew on the ground, then board 45 minutes before take-off. In the air, we use the autopilot which I can adjust, taking into account air traffic control instructions, altitude constraints or course alterations. Crew catering is quite mundane. I don't eat the same as my co-pilot – just in case. Arriving 10 hours later, we check in to our hotel together. We have two days to recuperate or 'down route'. Return legs depart at 1600 hours local and arrive at 6am our time.

Are passengers still surprised to hear Captain Jane instead of John? Some probably are. Cabin crew say people sit up and take more notice of what is being said. Sure, you get cracks about women drivers from



Jane Paros

43, was a casualty nurse for 15 years before becoming an airline pilot in 1990. She flies Boeing 767s for Airtours on long- and short-haul flights from Manchester. Single, she lives in Hale and earns £55,000 a year

males. At Airtours just seven out of 350 pilots are women, so few holidaymakers have the pleasure of one of us at the controls.

Would your knuckles whiten in a storm? We don't do storms. For light aircraft, they are disastrous, for big planes, uncomfortable. Flying through turbulence is sometimes unavoidable, and passengers find it disconcerting but I know it won't hurt us. Take-off is one of the more critical phases of flying. We're trained to reject a take-off up to a certain speed, so I say to myself, 'If something happens, we will stop' until I reach V1, the 'go/no-go' speed. After that, whatever happens, we get airborne. I've had systems failures but nothing critical. I've only diverted once due to weather.

Why are you always late then? It's usually accumulated air traffic delays. Take-off and landing slots in Europe are controlled from Brussels and the skies can get pretty congested. Airtours alone has 45 arrivals into Majorca every day, which gives some perspective.

By Jonny Beardsall

Eric said one pilot "would never fly solo while he had a hole in his arse". Arriving on site in his MGB, Eric was amazed to be told that this pilot was now in the air, solo. He observed a perfect circuit and admitted he might be in trouble himself when a silk smooth landing followed a classic approach. But as glider slowed, it slewed violently left hitting a parked tractor thus breaking the tailplane. When asked what happened, the pilot said at the last minute he thought he was driving a car and pressed the clutch pedal. Eric never had to get his sewing done.

It looked as if these members hit the headlines in S & G.

SAILPLANE & GLIDING

April/May 1984

CLUB NEWS



Three wise (?) men of the Essex & Suffolk GC. From l to r, John Whiddett, Les Marshall and Mike Bailey.

Chapter 9. Advances in Glider Design



Many of the gliders that appeared at Whatfield reflected the development of gliding technology over that period. The picture above shows the classic Olympia.

The Oly. The Olympia was designed for the 1936 Olympic Games so that every competitor flew a standard machine, making the result depend only on pilot skill and a bit of luck. This classic model 2b flies slowly and has a poor cross-country performance. However it is light and with big chord wings, it gives its current owners, Marion Doran and the Gilberts, great pleasure when flown well in light winds and weak thermals to out-climb modern gliders costing ten times as much.

The picture on the next page shows many of the Whatfield gliders beside the Hangar, Workshop and Clubhouse.



Condor Tug

Ka7

PilatusB4

Ka-13

RAF Blanik

Vega

ASW19

Ka-6c"Red Bear"

Libelle

Olympia 2b

Pirat

Skylark4

BG 135

Ka-6e



Condor Tug

Ka7

PilatusB4

Ka-13

RAF Blanik

Vega

ASW19

Ka-6cr'Red Bear'

Libelle

Olympia 2b

Pirat

Skylark4

BG 135

Ka-6e

All time Favourite. The Ka-6 appeared in many variants. The Club and syndicates have owned quite a few. The Ka-6_b was the version with a skid only. The manufacturer's idea was that with no main wheel it was more streamlined in the air, which was true.



Unfortunately, it was a devil to retrieve back to the launch point, as it meant lifting the full weight onto a dolly. It quickly wore out skids at launching. At launch, a pull was required on each wing tip to get it moving, except in snow!



Jettisonable Undercarriage. To help the launch, Martin Field, Ralph and Mike experimented with factory-designed jettisonable wheels under the Ka-6 skid. In the air it was a delightful machine to fly once free of the wheels. Unfortunately, if the pilot released the wheels too late or too high it broke the wheels or they fell beyond the airfield boundary. If released too early, the rubber wheels bounced back up to hit the glider.



This happened to Brian Scott who was lucky to get back with only half a tailplane. That was another repair for Ralph Brooker!

Wheels. The earliest single-seater to which our pilots convert after going solo is still is the Ka-6_{cr} which has a fixed wheel. Although straightforward to fly, it is a wonderfully responsive soaring machine. One private Ka-6_{cr} called "Red Bear" with a beautiful shiny finish has been with the club for over 25 years and so many members, currently Dick Brooker,

Colin Neil and Lewis Footring, have been proud to be in its syndicate.



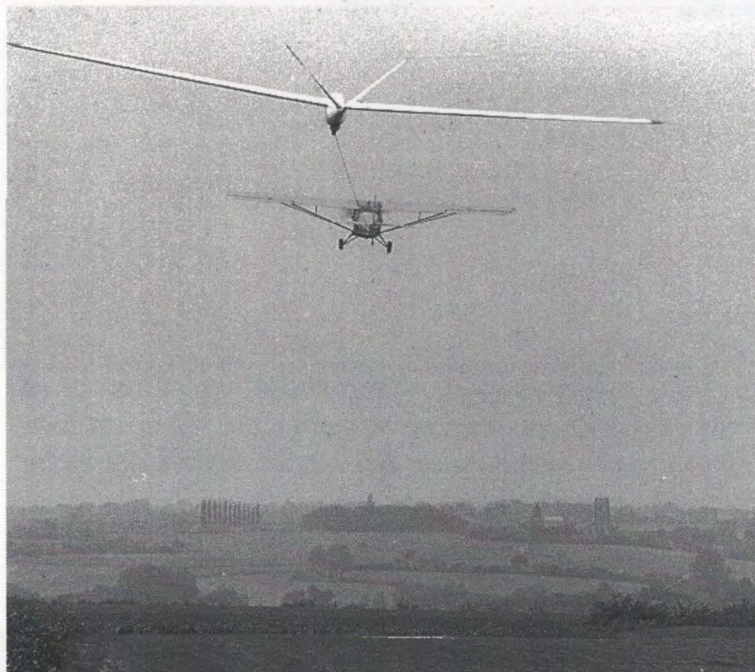
The Club also has a lovely example of the Ka-6e, which has an all flying tail instead of the conventional elevator. Although the tail is not seen, this glider appears on the cover of this book and can be picked out in the line-up picture of Whatfield earlier in this chapter.

T-Tails. The low tail-planes of the earlier gliders were always vulnerable to damage when landing in standing crops.



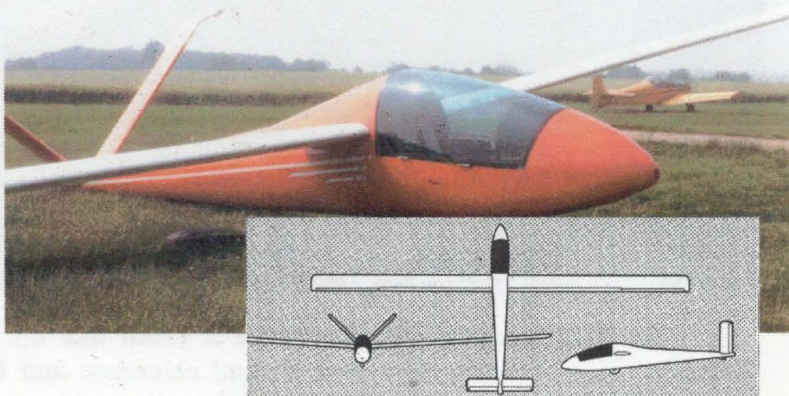
Nowadays, nearly all gliders use a T-tail like the Pirat, shown here deploying the airbrakes. For both ground clearance and for roll stability, a marked dihedral was built into the high three-piece wing.

TINSFOS. An increase in performance can be achieved by increasing the wing span, hence the "ThereIsNoSubstituteFOrSpan" acronym. The wings have to be stronger and therefore heavier to rig and transport and are more expensive than the usual compromise 15 metre span.



Examples of this were the Skylark 4, and the 18 metre SHK seen on tow from Whatfield.

Cheap and Cheerful. Bucking the trend for performance was a cheap little British glider made entirely of metal. Only 13.5-metre wingspan with a distinctive Vee tail, it had an inelegant parallel chord wing for ease of manufacture but made it most inefficient. A comfortable armchair-like cockpit made it very wide, which also resulted in a poor performance.



Slender and Sleek.

The Cobra was a Polish design attempt to increase performance by reducing the frontal area of the fuselage. This was partly achieved by having a very low narrow cockpit. With so little room, ones arms had to be pulled in tight. Also, having the extremely low canopy, which slid forward, the pilot was forced to lay almost supine.



This glider had a glass-fibre skin over plywood construction and with a fully retractable wheel, it was a forerunner of the fully plastic-composite moulded construction.

Glass Fibre Machines. Among Whatfield's first glass fibre gliders was the Libelle. This glider was light and a joy to rig, but its considerably superior increase in performance over wood did not have correspondingly better air brakes. It needed care not to overshoot the landing area.



The Vega.

Eric's last glider was British made, ordered straight from the drawing board and with some novel features.



It overcame the previously mentioned disadvantages. As seen in the photo, it had a very high ground clearance. It had flaps to vary the performance for both high and low speed, the air brakes were very effective trailing edge type and even the tail wheel retracted.

Chapter 10. Farmer Obstructs Runway

There was also trouble from an adjacent farmer to the south, Mr Crockatt.

East Anglian Daily Times
8th September 1979

A question of consent at airstrip

SUFFOLK and Essex Gliding Club was accused of "flying a kite" to deceive Babergh Council over planning consent to use an airstrip at Whatfield.

Now, a full report is to be prepared for the next meeting of the council's planning committee.

The issue was raised at the meeting by councillor for the area Mr. Alan Crockatt who said the club had last spring withdrawn an application for planning permission, claiming it already had consent.

"That has gone on for a number of months and they still haven't produced anything at all to prove existing consent.

"Personally, I don't think they can," he said.

Mr. Crockatt said the club had also erected a large hut on the airfield — again without planning permission — and an application for this would not be coming before the committee until next month.

Mr. Swain said he had told club officers of his "very great concern" that the hut was being "stored in an upright position" on the site before planning permission was considered.

"Most people would think it was built," he remarked.

He said he would investigate the matter further and present a report to the next meeting.

'Why I parked on glider club's runway'

FARMER and Suffolk county councillor Mr. Alan Crockatt told yesterday why he parked his Land-Rover in the middle of a gliding club's runway.

It was the only way he could make the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club take notice of his complaint, he said.

The club had appeared to take no notice despite four or five visits to complain about trailing ropes from towing craft dragging through crops.

His protest agitated members of the club, he admitted. But he left the vehicle on the airstrip for only five minutes and was careful to ensure it did not stop any gliders returning to base.

Mr. Crockatt was speaking at the third and final day of an Environment Department inquiry.

The club is appealing against Suffolk County Council's refusal to grant it an existing use certificate and against enforcement action on land at Whatfield near Hadleigh.

Landed

Three times this year gliders had landed in his

A dispute arose over the amount of compensation for damage by the tug rope being dragged through his crop when returning to land. He aggravated the club by erecting six-foot high concrete posts on his land on the approach to the cross-runway.

These were always a great danger to tug and glider pilots coming in low, leaving no emergency undershoot. This would eventually catch one glider which cartwheeled in, but whose pilot, Phil Duffin, fortunately survived unscathed.

The press cutting omits the fact that Crockatt had driven his Range Rover on to the runway, blocking the incoming tug which had to abort its landings and go around a couple of times.

CFI Elvin Hibbard rushed down to remonstrate with him, and fearing Crockatt might drive to the intersection to simultaneously block both runways to tug and airborne gliders, stood his ground. Whereupon, Crockatt drove over Elvin's foot. Elvin shouted in anguish, Club members urging him to lay it on a bit more, exaggerate the dance and limp and threaten to sue. Crockatt never tried the same trick again. Some say the duties of a CFI are never done!

Please read the planning officer's quite reasonable remark in the other press cutting about the completed clubhouse being stored in an upright position. How did the Club get away with that excuse? Answer- to stop it rotting if stored pieces were stacked on top of each other. The picture shows it being dismantled at the end of its life.



Chapter 11. The Last Tug Planes

For some time Eric had owned a share with John Thurlow and John Pickering in a tiny little monoplane, a Rollason Turbulent. This machine may have prompted the club to buy similar but larger Rollason Condor tug planes.



In the late 70's the club had some help from the Sports Council with grants and loans to update the Ka7 glider to a Ka13 and the Auster tug was replaced with two Rollason Condors. One Condor needed more power before it could tow gliders, so a brand new 130 hp Rolls Royce engine was fitted. Both Condors were repainted. Les Marshall is seen masking G-AYZT prior to a respray.



The before and after liveries of ZT are shown on the next page, being flown by pilots Robbie Hatwell and Jonathon Abbess.





Even the tug landed out one day with a 300-foot cloud base. Luckily your author got down in a field near the local pub, the Red Rose at Lindsey, where we used to have a few beers after flying. But this was the first flight of the day!



The photo above shows refuelling later in the day. Ordinarily, by this date, the club's bowser brought in fuel as below.



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The dangers of tugging are illustrated with the dramatic end of ZT due to a spinning accident. The pilot, Kevin Balaam, was injured but we are pleased to record that he returned to fly again.



An ex crop sprayer Pawnee replacement was then bought.



Jonathon Abbess's in-flight failure of its tailplane was also dramatic. A complete breakage of the starboard stay allowed that half of the tailplane to rotate to the vertical. The other half of the tailplane required so much force on the stick that Jonathon had to brace his feet against it. Without a parachute or radio his only option was to choose the biggest and nearest flat area which was Wattisham Airbase. The landing gear collapsed on touch down, and he escaped without injury after a marvellous piece of cool thinking.

At first, every person on the airbase who came out didn't realise the near disaster until they walked round and saw one tailplane vertical. The duty guardsman said "My God", got the duty sergeant who said "My God", got the duty officer who said "My God", got the station commander who said "My God", got the Commanding Officer who was annoyed at being disturbed tending his garden said "My God. You'd better store it with our Lightnings". The club took up the storage offer, while awaiting the Investigation into the accident.



The Close-up shows the reason - metal fatigue.

Chapter 12. Murder

As the years went by, tales were circulating of Sonny's drinking. His power instructor at Ipswich tells in his book¹ that Sonny was a bit fond of the bottle or anything else that carried alcohol and he was well aware of Sonny's slurred speech during flights with him. As an instructor he was even apprehensive about the effect on himself of the gin fumes in the cockpit.

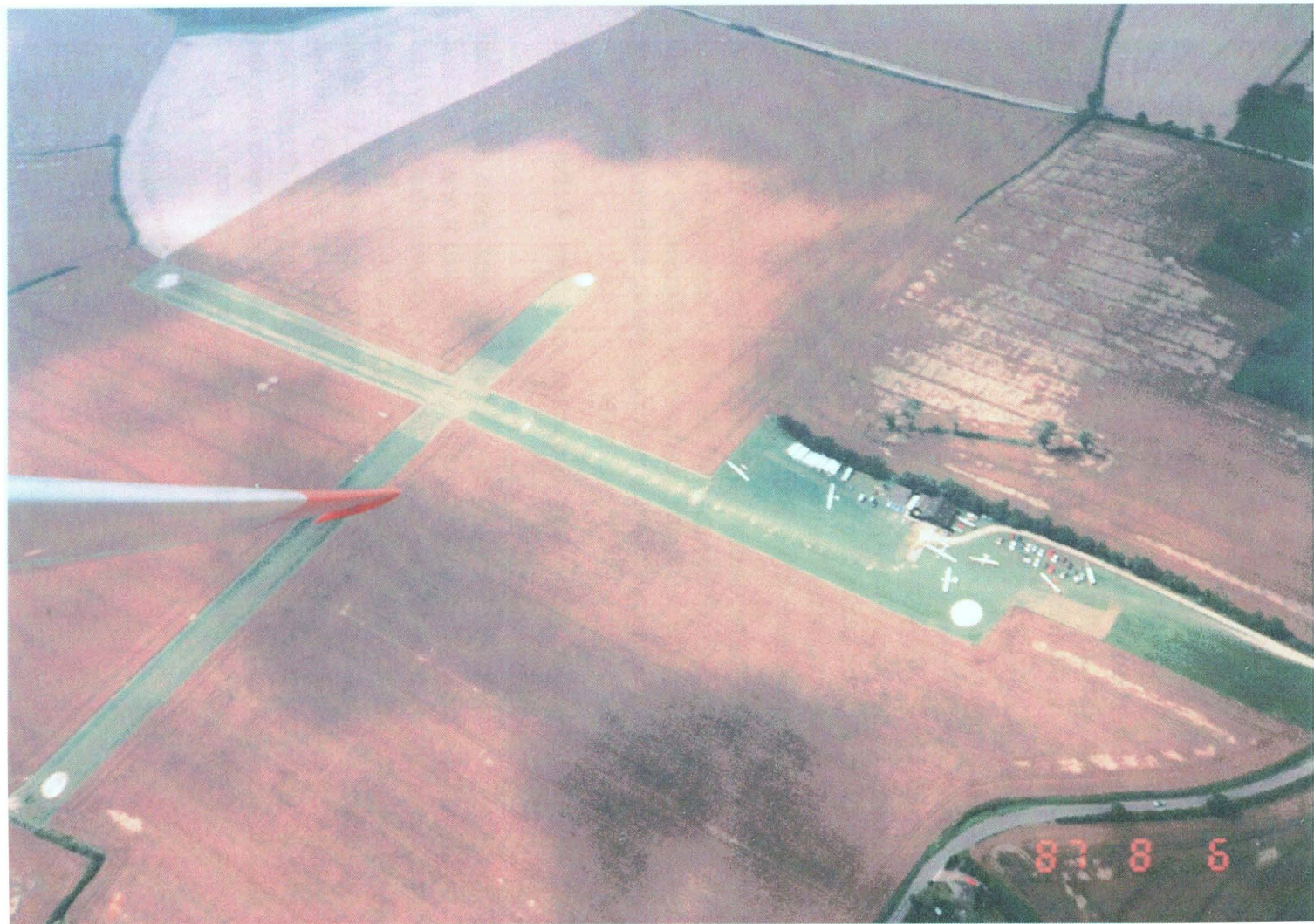
Ralph, too, tells of how, before he flew power, he was invited by Sonny to accompany him in the Cessna from Whatfield to Ipswich Airport. On the way Sonny's eyes were closing and Ralph realised then that Sonny had been drinking heavily. Sonny told him to fly it, which as a glider pilot he did reasonably, but when Ralph got near the Airport he shook Sonny to wake him and told him he wouldn't be responsible for landing it. Sonny took control but did a circuit in the incorrect direction. On being summoned to the Control tower, he told them it was Ralph flying.

It was Joan Waller, Sonny's wife, who actually owned the fields and airstrip that Sonny farmed. She granted the club a lease on the two cross-strips and she leased the remaining quadrants to a farmer, Mr Craske. He nibbled away at the strips, seen in the next page photo, each year ploughing another furrow narrowing the width still more.

The Club had gentleman's agreement with Mrs Waller for first refusal of site should she ever sell.

As time went on, Sonny Waller drank more and more, some club members finding him lying in a water ditch where he said it was lovely and cool. One day, she came to the site with a shotgun believing that Sonny had another woman somewhere on site, which was true, and his Range Rover was there. With her finger on the trigger she pointed the gun at CFI Elvin demanding to know where Sonny was. It was loaded and she did fire but only to blast out the tyres on the Range Rover. That night, in desperation, Joan became so infuriated with him that she hit him with a hammer over the head. She was accused and convicted of murder and sent to prison.

¹ "Tales Out of Flying School" by Stanley Ward



The chances of now proving the unwritten first refusal agreement looked pretty weak since the other 'gentleman' to the contract was a convicted murderer in prison.

The land had to be put up for sale and Mr Craske bought the whole field leaving the Club as sitting tenant on the airstrip, which had a few more years to run on the lease.

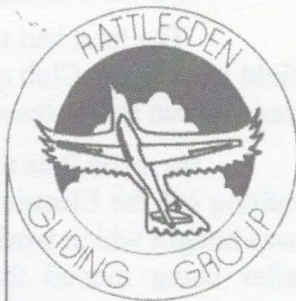
He made it as difficult as possible for the Club, such as immediately cutting off the Electricity supply. So, an old diesel generator, shown here, was bought which worked like a Trojan and was still working 15 years later after being moved from Whatfield. Relations with the new landlord deteriorated more as the years went by. In 1988 the rent was doubled. Even so optimism was expressed that security of tenure had been achieved.



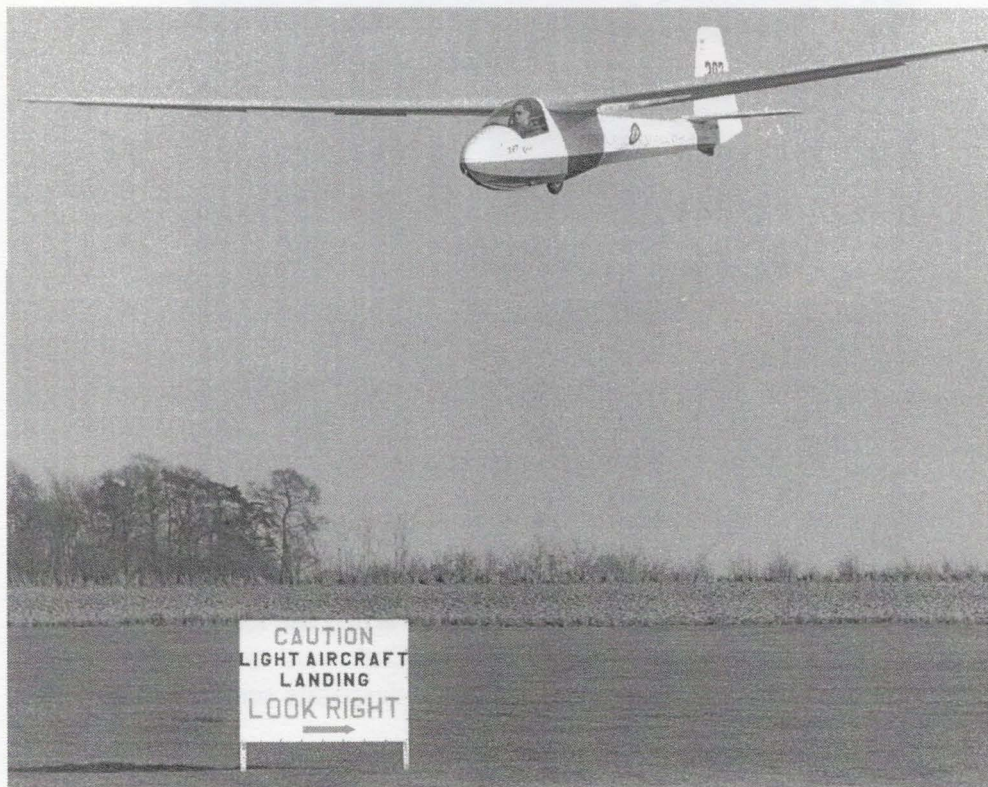
This optimism was totally misplaced. When the lease did expire the landlord asked for a crippling new rent. The Club went to court but lost the case. Severe restrictions were imposed and a desperate search was on again for another site.

Chapter 13. The Wilderness Years

In the mid 70's after the conflict about the site, there were disagreements on the way forward and at an Annual General meeting a vote was taken to transfer the Club to Andrewsfield. Although it was defeated, it resulted in a split up of the Club and important members did leave. Ralph Brooker left to help form the Rattlesden Gliding Club, Eric Richards joined RAF Wattisham and John Thurlow concentrated on his Ipswich School of Flying.



At Wattisham, Eric effectively prevented the break-up of the RAF GSA Club when he stepped in as C.F.I. as no other fully rated RAF instructor was available. Shown here is Eric in the RAF Ka8.



Simultaneously, Eric was also the nominal CFI for the new and inexperienced Ridgewell Oatly Gliding Club, since the proprietor, Freddy Wiseman was not a BGA recognised full Instructor.

That club might be best known for its winch, converted from a Combine Harvester.



The only combine harvester winch in the world which was used at Ridgewell Oatley GC by the late Freddie Wiseman.

The E&SGC had become stale and in confusion when Eric, Ralph and Peter Wilby rejoined in 1976. After resignations leaving the club leaderless, Eric was re-elected Chairman, took charge and steered the club forward with great diplomatic skill.

The previous paragraph is a synopsis of the nomination of Eric for the award of the "BGA Diploma for Services to Gliding". It recognised also his talent as a "Soaring Pilot, Tug Pilot, Author and true Clubman".

He was present to accept the award in 1979 from the BGA.

He was the first E&S Club member to gain all three diamonds on his international badge.



Eric flying Tug



Chapter 14. Search for Another Site

A desperate search was made throughout East Anglia for a new site. All the old wartime airfields were checked out. It is interesting to see how many airfields there are in just the area North of Whatfield alone from which one can pick out dozens of disused airfields on the map.



Some members would leave the Club if the new site were to be too remote, especially those already travelling from London and Southend. Amalgamating with other clubs at Tibenham (Norwich) and Rattlesden (Stowmarket) was considered but these were too far north for the majority of members.

Two Essex airfields came up for sale at the time, Ridgewell and Raydon and either would have been suitable. Both were possibilities as joint

ventures but the clubs could only put up money for the runways but not the associated farmland, which was unacceptable to the vendors. A group of locals bought Raydon and Essex G.C. bought Ridgewell airfield.

Ford Motor Co. already occupied Boreham Airfield as a test track. Marconi owned Rivenhall with massive concrete blocks precisely down the middle of the runways on which it mounted its radar test equipment. Neither were Birch, Debach, Boxted nor Lavenham available as they were being turned back to agriculture. Stradishall still looks landable today. However, it is a prison and once there was an attempt by helicopter to get a prisoner out. If one flies too near it even now, even in a glider, the authorities get anxious.

Serious thought was given to amalgamating with Essex G.C. Stansted Airspace was squeezing it as in the cartoon. Also it was a big club and members felt too impersonal for the traditional friendly atmosphere that was deliberately generated at Whatfield.

In an effort to raise funds and support, the Pilatus glider was displayed at the Essex Show, with a raffle for a car supplied by Chris Nunn at cost.



However, Wormingford Airfield, which had been sought by Eric in the Boxted days, suddenly became a possibility again.

The new owner of Wormingford, Mr David Hodge, was agreeable to the club renting almost whatever land the club wished. He accepted the deal and proved to be a perfect landlord on a perfect gliding site.

The 1988 photo, looking southwest was taken before the club contemplated moving there. It shows the distinctive diamond shape of the field, and Wormingford village in the foreground. The Club now has a lease until 2015.

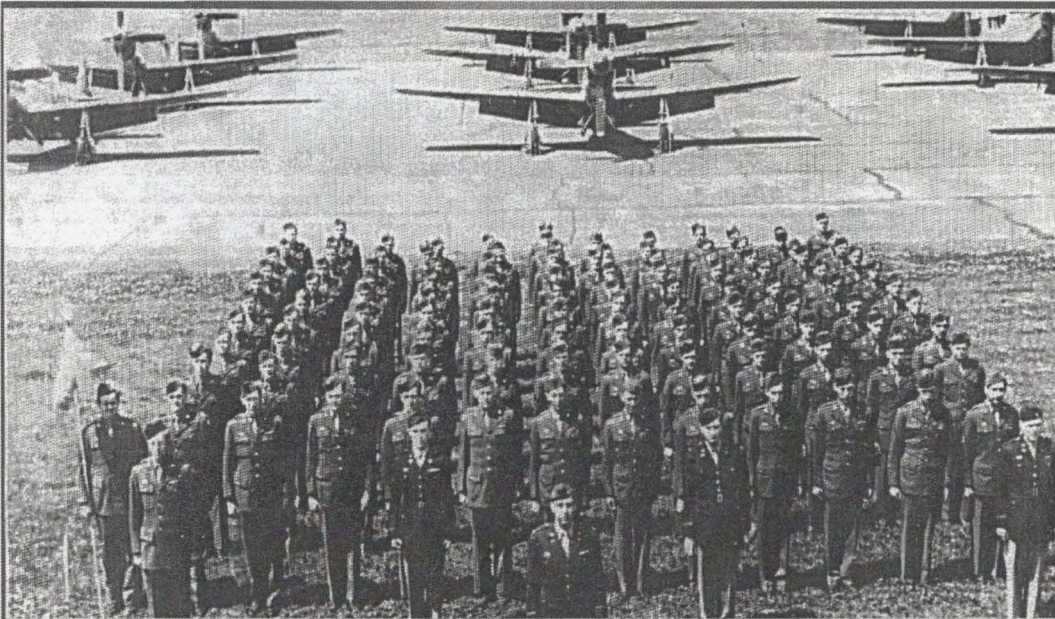


Chapter 15. Wormingford

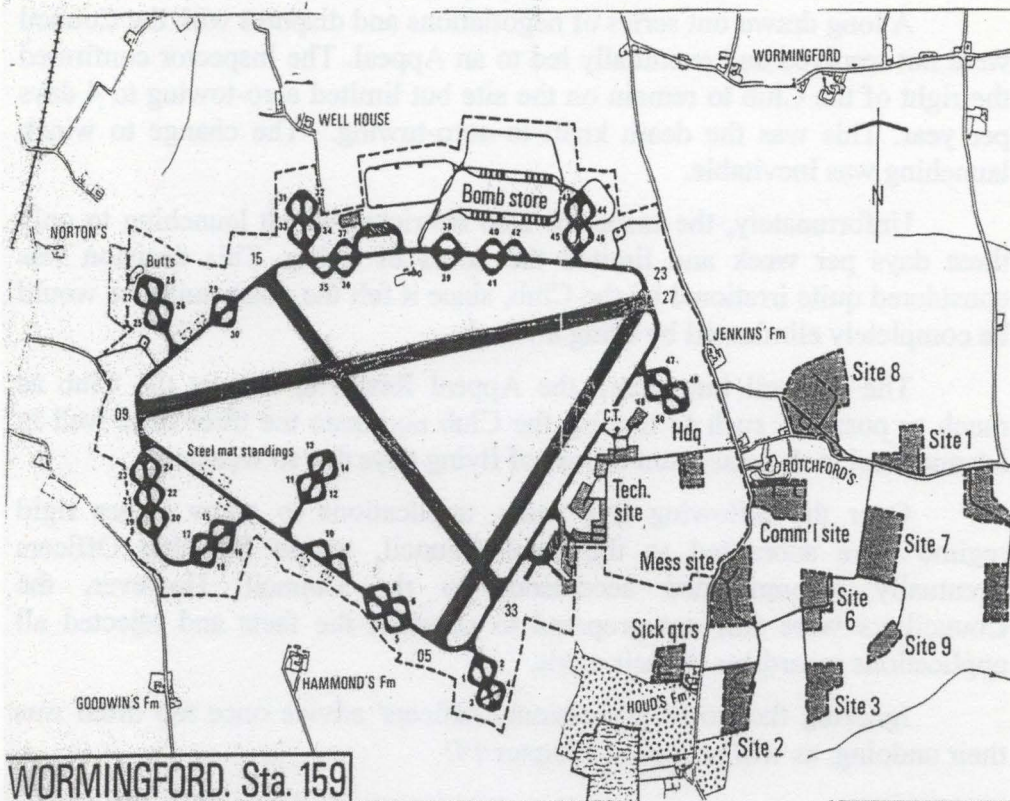
When the Club arrived at Wormingford there was little sign of the men who lived and fought and died from here. The American memories were of men and machines, such as the squadron shown here.

Only 12 foot strips of the main, cross and perimeter concrete runways remained, the rest having been pulled up for hardcore and the land returned to agriculture.

The plan on the next page shows the airfield layout as made by the Americans in 1943. This was a standard design with a mile long main East-West runway.



REACH FOR THE SKY: Members of the United States Eighth Air Force 55 Fighter Group which was based at Wormingford airfield, near Colchester, from April 1944 to July 1945



A grass strip was planted alongside the 12-foot wide remains of the main runway, increasing the width to 50 metres. A caravan continued to be used as a temporary clubhouse.

Using the planning permission granted to Geoffrey Woods in 1966, the club started gliding at Wormingford in 1990. The club was proud to host the Inter-club competition on its new site soon after arriving. With other tug planes besides its own, the noise aroused antagonism from the locals. As well as gliding they also feared further flying expansion and formed an opposition group with the acronym SWAT- Stop Wormingford Air Traffic.



They had considerable wealth and appeared to wield a lot of influence with the Colchester Borough Council. They produced their own logo shown here.

A long drawn out series of negotiations and disputes with the Council were not resolved and eventually led to an Appeal. The Inspector confirmed the right of the Club to remain on the site but limited aero-towing to 4 days per year. This was the death knell to aero-towing. The change to winch launching was inevitable.

Unfortunately, the Inspector also restricted winch launching to only three days per week and limited the hours of flying. This decision was considered quite irrational by the Club, since it felt the noise nuisance would be completely eliminated by using a winch.

The Council interpreted the Appeal Result to restrict the Club as much as possible, such as making the Club nominate the three days well in advance and took no account of loss of flying days due to weather.

Over the following five years, applications to allow a less rigid regime were submitted to the local Council, whose Planning Officers eventually recommended acceptance to the Council. However, the Councillors were still not prepared to consider the facts and rejected all applications regardless of their merit.

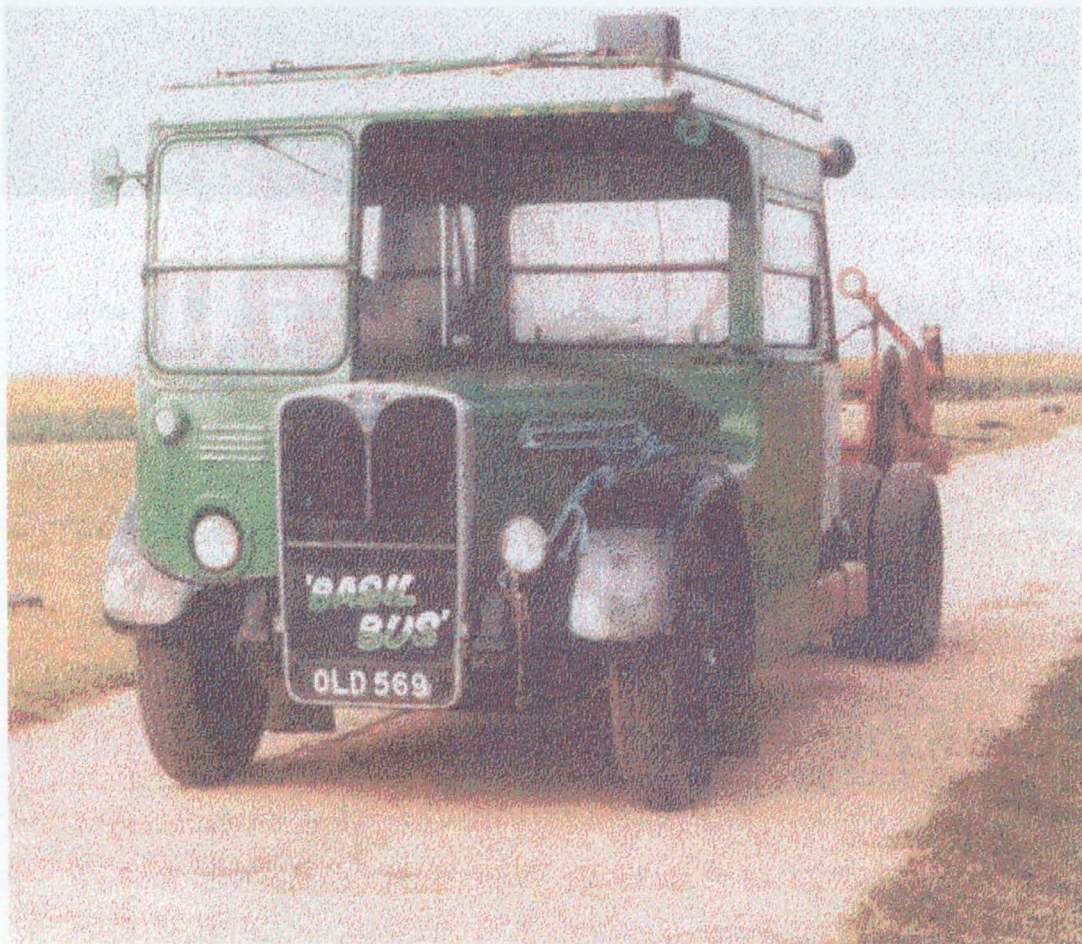
Ignoring their own professional officers' advice once too often was their undoing, as will be told in Chapter 19.

Chapter 16. Winch Launching

The enforced change to a winch operation was both sudden and traumatic. Peter Wilby, who as told previously, had a lot of winching experience, instigated a training programme. The first winch was a hired diesel powered machine.

It was affectionately known as "Basil Bus".

The Diesel smoked so much on full power that the driver, on being given the "all out" signal, had to trust to luck that eventually a glider would appear through the exhaust smoke on the end of the wire.





Basil Bus is shown with Les Marshall at the controls. With solid wire, it taught the club the worst possible way cables could kink, which they did regularly.

Within a year, a winch to replace Basil Bus was built by Mike Haynes and Mervyn Gooch, with help from many others. Mike is seen sitting on top of the cab.

This had a 7 litre American Pontiac engine, giving members good launches at a third of aero tow costs. It transformed the club's launch rate and also its finances.

However, it did mean that the club was totally dependent on the reliability of the winch and expected downtime for maintenance so a second winch was sought.

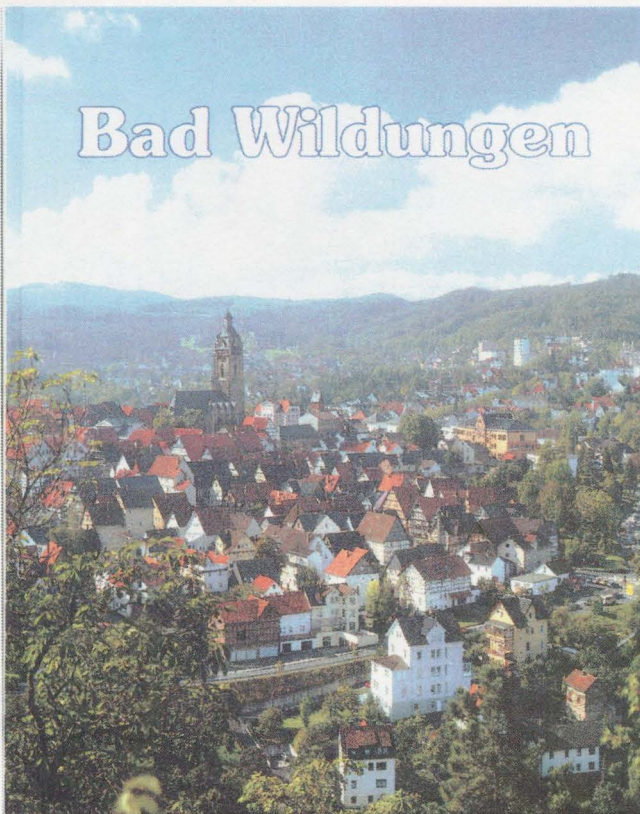


A German gliding Club at Bad Wildungen had advertised a Winch for sale. CFI Paul Rice, Winch-masters Bob Brown, Dick Brooker and Tony Brown made a couple of trips over to buy it and have it transported back. They are seen overleaf taking in a visit to the gliding museum at the Wasserkuppe with some German club members. This contact has been kept up and the Germans have subsequently visited Wormingford.

The club now had the capacity to launch the whole fleet quickly by using both winches, taking care not to muddle the cables.



A book of Bad Wildungen was presented by the German Club, and is now kept in the Club's archives.



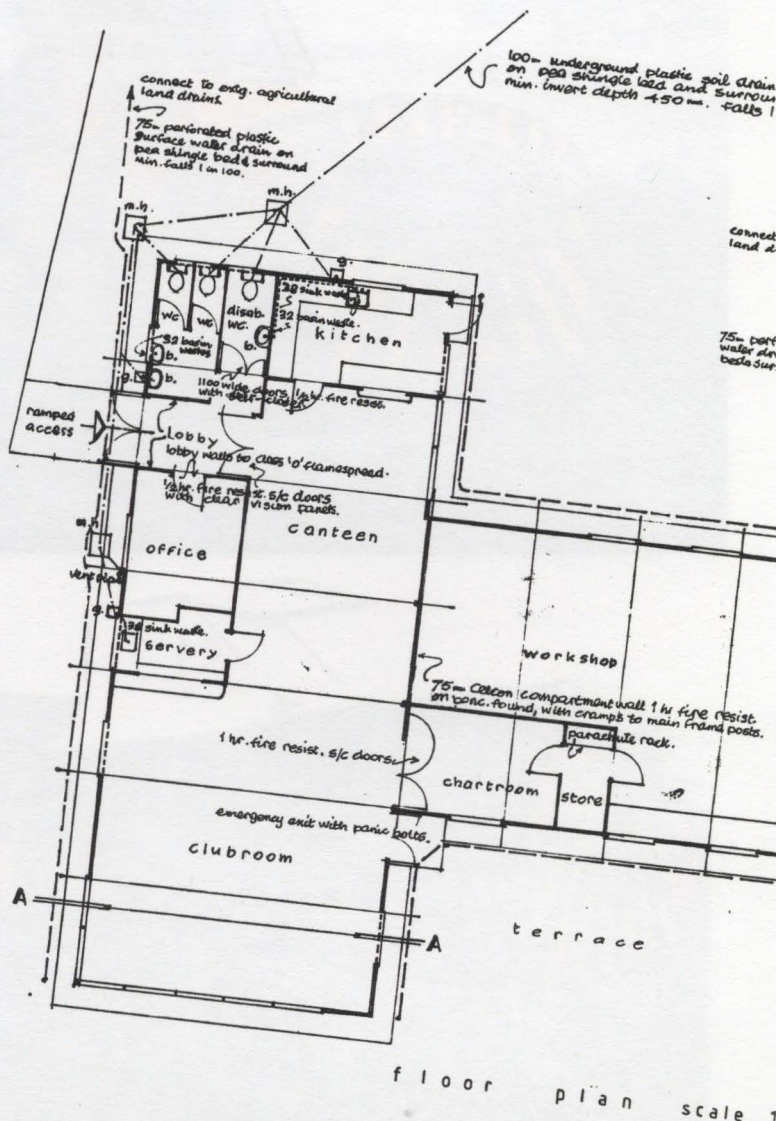
This second winch was on a self propelled Ford Chassis. The winch team added a safety cage and cover to the cab. The Club then re-engined both winches and bought two almost new engines as spares. The final step was to convert the winches to run on Propane gas, producing such economy that it was also feasible to install Propane fuelled central heating in the clubhouse and workshop.



Chapter 17. Building a Clubhouse

In North London, Wally King had located a contractor, which had finished with its site hut. It had seen some pretty rough treatment, so Wally got it at a good price and had it transported to the landlord's yard, where it deteriorated for years. The landlord, David Hodge, rightly put pressure on the Club to either use it or get rid of it. The Club planned to use it as the skeleton of the new clubhouse.

John Amor designed the clubhouse and hangar. The preliminary sketches of the clubhouse show the basic layout. Unfortunately, Colchester Council thwarted the Club at every step. Even after the Inspector gave permission at a planning appeal, the Council made it as difficult and as expensive for the club as it could.



The photo shows the first portion of the old contractors hut being lifted into place, with the new internal works being commenced below.



No photos will do justice to the enormous effort put in by many members to build the clubhouse and workshop.

It was topped by a suitable weathervane, of course.



Chapter 18. Sewerage Works Stolen

The Club was about to install a sophisticated and expensive sewerage system, using a large fibreglass tank that was to be buried. One night the padlock to the main gate was cut and the tank stolen. The photo shows the replacement tank, which was successfully buried.



However, the thieves returned and stole the cast iron manhole covers. The two main people who built the clubhouse and works were Wally King and Peter Nicholls



Chapter 19. 'Freedom to Fly' Enquiry

In 1997 the Club mounted its fresh Appeal by Chairman Chris Price and member Phil Isbell, a professional planning consultant. The Appeal was against yet another rejection by the local Councillors of a logical, well-reasoned application. The Councillors voted to reject the application despite being recommended to accept by their own professional Planning Officers. As was borne out at the Enquiry, the Councillors were not facing the fact that the noise nuisance had been eradicated and that the sound from local farm machinery was considerably more than the launching and flying of gliders.

The British Gliding Association had been becoming increasingly concerned that the restrictive conditions applied to Wormingford at the 1992 Appeal were being used as a precedent in decisions on other gliding clubs around the land. So, the B.G.A generously sponsored Louis Chicot, a planning consultant, to work with Phil Isbell and a barrister, David Alteras. The BGA provided an expert witness, Roger Coote, who later reported in S&G as follows

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Roger Coote, BGA development officer, says he has some good news at last!



Planning appeal upheld at Wormingford

Essex & Suffolk GC has won its appeal against restrictive planning conditions imposed at Wormingford Airfield.

The club was successful at appeal in 1991 but the inspector, in allowing gliding to continue, imposed planning conditions which effectively limited gliding to a winch launching operation only and restricted flying to 9am to 6.30pm at weekends and on one other day per week, to be agreed in advance with the local authority, in writing. Members suffered the prolonged frustration of missing the best soaring conditions through being unable to select at short notice the days on which to fly.

In recent years the club, through its planning consultant, Philip Isbell, sought to negotiate more flexible planning conditions which would allow members to make better use of good soaring conditions as and when they could be predicted. Despite the fact that the council's planning officer was persuaded as to the reasonableness of this approach, the members of the council backed the views of a vociferous minority of local residents and refused to alter the conditions.

The main issue of concern to the local authority and by the objectors' group, SWAT (Stop Wormingford Air Traffic - and determined to do just that!) was loss of amenity, due to:-

1. Noise generated by winch launching and by gliders in flight.
2. Visual intrusion of gliders into the landscape and skyline (immortalised by Constable).
3. Perceived invasion of residents' privacy by glider pilots.

Although an appeal could have been

lodged against these refusals, the BGA, on the advice of Louis Chicot (planning consultant), was reluctant to commit funds from its Planning and Environment Trust. It was judged better to attack the principles underlying the refusal, than to appeal seeking a compromise which would undoubtedly have benefited the club, but not necessarily other clubs in the future.

In the light of this, a further application was submitted seeking to remove in their entirety the conditions restricting winch launching at the site. As expected, the application was refused and therefore an appeal was lodged with the support of BGA members' funds.

David Alteras, acting as counsel for the club, called expert witnesses to demonstrate that glider pilots have more important things to do when flying the circuit than to peer into people's bathroom windows and that, in spite of a local farmer's claim that he had an air pollution problem due to a proliferation of gliders, soaring is an environmentally friendly and virtually silent sport.

Other comments attributed to SWAT members appeared in the last issue ("Way off Track", p283). The inspector dealt with their concerns over noise in his decision letter where he states: "I did not find that the noise from launches, flights or landings came close to the levels of noise described by some objectors".

The inspector's decision marks an important milestone in planning for gliding sites for, as some of our clubs are all too well aware, the conditions imposed by the original inspector back in 1991 have been used as benchmarks by other local planning authorities in negotiating for new sites.

The objectors had already succeeded in preventing the club from aerotowing at Wormingford and had declared their intention to stop gliding from the old wartime airfield altogether. Fortunately, common sense prevailed.

Costs were not awarded, so although about 40% of the cost of the appeal was from BGA members' funds, the balance was borne by the Essex & Suffolk GC.

Furthermore, the Club was greatly helped by the exaggerated evidence from the local opposition group SWAT, "Save Wormingford From Air Traffic". One lady, who lived a mile from the runway, complained of gliders passing level with her bathroom window, observing her at her ablutions. A chicken farmer, also a Councillor, stated that over-flying gliders were frightening his chickens, even though they were inside broiler houses. One lady had a phobia about both spiders and gliders. Another said the gliders made a noise like chalk scraping on a blackboard, not a countryside noise.



Although the Inspector remained impassive listening to some laughable descriptions, it was an Enquiry that lasted 3 days with strong cross-examination from both sides. The team worked till 4 o'clock in the morning preparing the detail for that day's evidence. By that time, our barrister, David Alteras, had all the facts at his fingertips, which became obvious at each day's hearing.

He was brilliant in questioning the Chairman of SWAT, Mr Durlacher, a rich and powerful City figure. A profile of him had recently been published in the financial pages of one of the daily papers, which included his hobbies. Durlacher initially came across as arrogantly full of confidence. Someone with his presence might easily have swayed the hearing, especially in airing his views on noisemakers. The barrister gently probed him about his own activities. Durlacher mentioned tennis and swimming and skiing, becoming quieter at each one, so everyone in the Council Chamber realised that he was keeping something back. It was finally dragged out of him that his hobby was shooting game birds! When asked if shotguns weren't noisy, he replied that it was a different kind of noise. David Alteras didn't need to say another word, knowing that Durlacher's hypocrisy had been exposed.

The final result was that all restrictions on winch launching were lifted. The B.G.A. considered that its expenditure well worthwhile, too, in a benchmark decision for the gliding movement in this country.

Chapter 20. Building a Hangar

The Council, stung at having lost its Appeal, used its planning bureaucracy to insist that the hangar have both a low-pitched roof and hips at



both ends. Consequentially, this resulted in an enormous lattice girder over the door opening, increasing the cost unnecessarily. The hangar was built by contract. Two thirds of the funding came from the Sports Council's cheque.



Of course, most of the work in the club is normally voluntary, as seen with Chairman Chris Price and son Rupert (known as Bill & Ben) keeping the grass immaculate.



The Duke of Edinburgh, the BGA's Patron, opened our new hangar on 3rd June 1998. After the official opening, the Duke watched a demonstration flight of the club Twin Astir in showery conditions and toured our other facilities.



Phil Duffin arranged for a Spitfire to give a 15-minute display, but in accordance with our planning permission it was not allowed to land.



The Duke wished to meet the kitchen volunteers, Doris Smith, Joan Brooker, Sally King and Joan Friend and had a cup of tea with them.



An impressive number of veteran Americans who flew from Wormingford, including the Group's wartime commanding officer Colonel Morton Magoffin, came over especially.

The club accepted gifts including the flag of the United States of America that flew at Wormingford, together with two Presidential Unit Citations for acts of outstanding merit and bravery when operating from Wormingford. Mr. Martin Lucash, who served with the 362nd Fighter Group of the US Army Air Force, donated these.

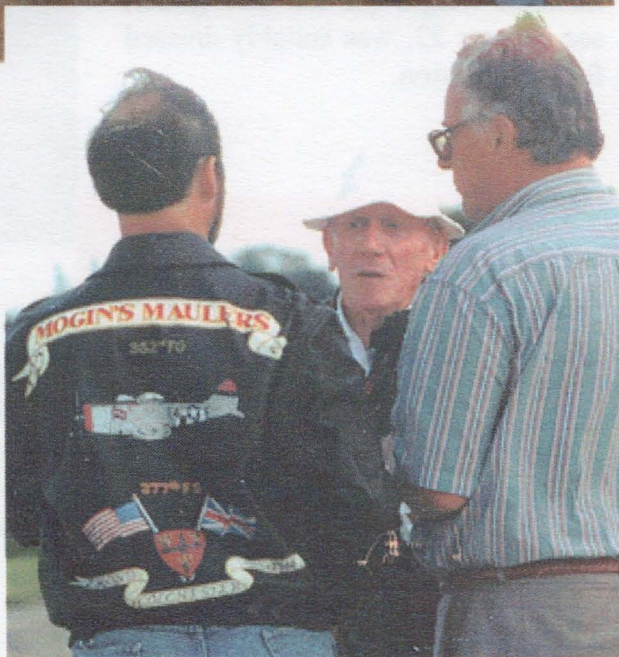
During a formal ceremony held at the War Memorial at the edge of the airfield, Col Morton Magoffin gave a moving address remembering those airmen under his command at Wormingford who had died in battle during the War.





Standing in front of the hangar plaque after the ceremony with Mort Magoffin and Chris Price are American veteran pilots Laughlin and Stanley Stepnitz.

Later, Mr Lucash's son wore his father's informal shirt depicting "Mogin's Maulers" symbolising "Magoffin's Mustangs".



With temporary heating and decorations, in later years, sit-down Christmas Dinners were held in the Hangar, with live music and a bar.



Naturally, Jerry Dummy, the manikin weight for the T21 glider, see chapter 22, was suitably dressed for the occasion.



One of the after dinner speakers was Mike Bird (Platypus of Sailplane & Gliding) who we insisted should listen to all our stories too.



Peter Fuller 2002

Chapter 21. More Americans Return



• Ready for combat. Hundreds of fighter planes line the runway at Wormingford ready to defend north Essex and the Home Counties from German raiders.

A year after the opening of the hangar, another group of veterans returned. These were of the 3rd Scouting Force with their ex Commanding Officer (now a medical doctor), Vince Masters.



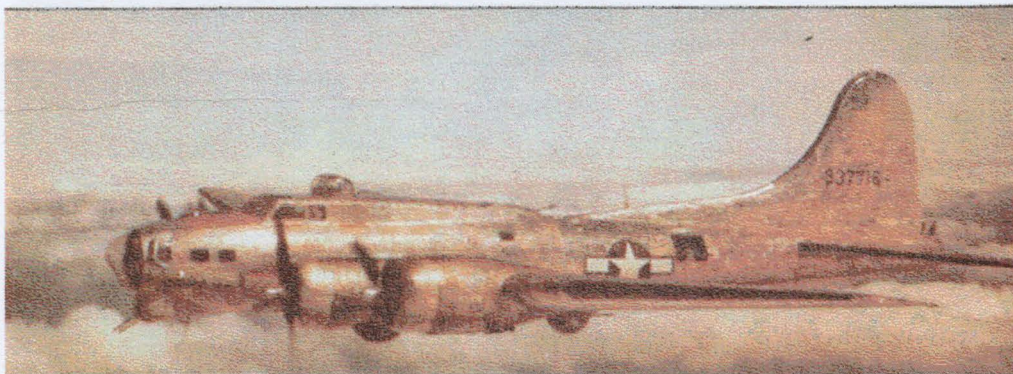
LT COL VINCENT W MASTERS 3RD SCOUTING FORCE COMMANDER (DR VINCE MASTERS)



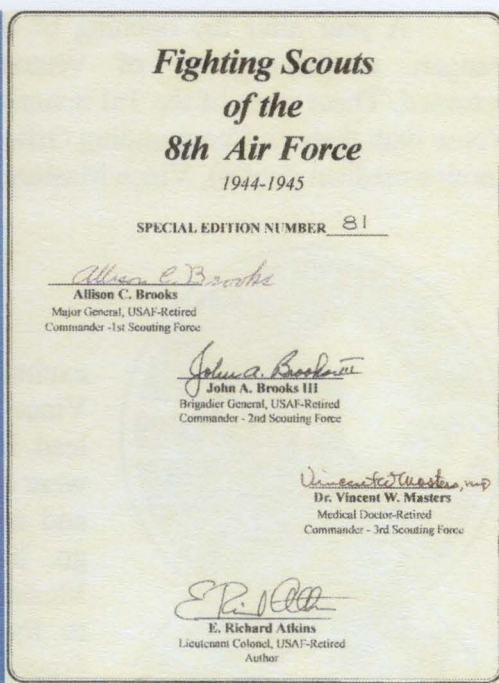
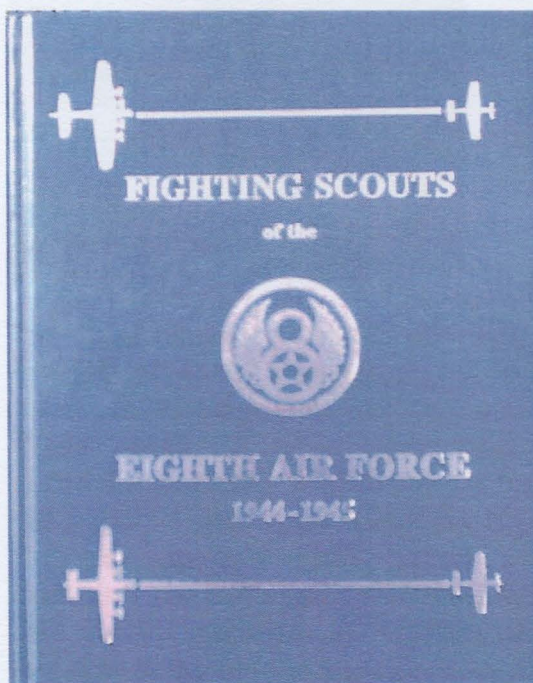
3RD SCOUTING FORCE

The 3rd Scouting Force was an exclusive set of flyers selected by Major Vince Masters from volunteers of the best lead bomber-pilots in the Air Force. They were near the end of their tour of 30 missions and might otherwise have been expected to go back home. They converted to fly Mustangs from Wormingford. Their task was to fly in advance of the main Eighth Air Force bomber streams to provide reports of conditions on route and over the target.

They thought they would never have to fly bombers again until a squadron of B17 Flying Fortresses was allotted to them for reconnaissance duties. These were stripped of armaments and as the pilots considered themselves pretty good flyers, they flew the lightened but massive Fortresses like fighters including peel-ups (what glider pilots call beat-ups) when landing.



The visitors presented a book entitled "Fighting Scouts of the Eighth Air Force 1944-1945" to the Club. It is in the club archives and provides a fascinating history.

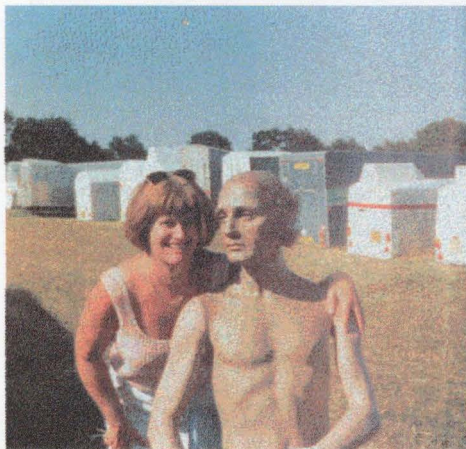


Chapter 22. Gliders We've Known



A Syndicate of a dozen members bought a T21, a classic glider of the 1940's for £400 including insurance soon after coming to Wormingford. It was especially fun to fly on nice summer days being open cockpit. Flying very slowly it was possible to out-thermal the fast modern machines as a shout between the side-by-side pilots showed their exhilaration. If a pilot wished to fly it solo, it needed a ballast weight. A mannequin strapped into the passengers seat provided this. He was named "Mr Jerry Dummy", seen sitting next to Tom Brenton and loved by the all the girls.

The glider was meticulously refurbished at the club and sent away for professional repainting. Tragically, it caught fire in the paint shop and was destroyed. The painter found another T21 to replace it, but it never felt the same as the one on which so much work had been done.



In the earlier years, attempts were made to add a motor. It was not permitted at a BGA site so the old Lavenham airfield was used and the CFI insisted that no club gliders should be involved. Ralph Brooker and Mike Thorpe modified their syndicated Grasshopper.



Ralph is seen sitting in the non-motorised version with Bob Bousfield on the wing.



Although it got off the ground on auto-tow with the motor in the photo, the tiny 'Indian' engine did not even have the power to sustain flight. Mike Thorpe still describes the flight as "diabolical".



With Martin Field, they then tried the little engine with its tiny propeller on their K6 before trying a lawn mower engine and a larger belt-driven prop. Mike carved all the beautiful propellers by hand.



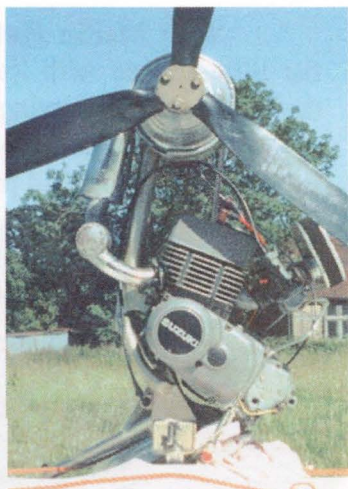
Another engine, a JLO, was found and tried on both the "Grutor" (a Grunau fuselage fitted with Tutor wings) and also on their very light Oly 460 with limited success. Mike is seen here in Oly 460.



Another attempt was by John Amor on his Cobra with a much more powerful Suzuki engine and a three bladed pusher propeller obtained from Dick Everett. Like all 'turbo props', it was designed to start in the air by diving the glider to windmill the propeller and start the motor.



However, being a high revving two-stroke it needed more revs than could be achieved by hand swinging the geared down propeller on the ground, so failed to test start.



As we know, innovative ideas come from such trials, which gave much pleasure to those who were pioneers, despite the sceptical view of some onlookers here.



Glider manufacturers have introduced sophisticated built-in retracting engines, such as in John Horne's Discus. This, too, is a 'turbo prop' and not a self-launcher. In any case, our planning permission does not permit motor gliders, so it must be launched by winch, but should avoid landing out.

Mervyn and Martin ordered a Lak 12 from Lithuania at the end of the Cold War. It was a heavy glider but with 20.5metre long wings it had the potential for very good performance. It was delayed in arriving in the country and members teased that being so big and heavy it was being used as a roadblock against the Russian tanks.

When it did arrive, members soon found that the 2-piece wings were indeed big and heavy. They were also most difficult to fit together. Volunteers to rig became less and less easy to find after experiencing some frustrating attempts at rigging. The only tactics, when asked to help rig the Lak, were to refuse because of lack of strength or of a bad back. If one didn't have a bad back before rigging, afterwards one certainly would have been suffering with crushed vertebrae.

Ralph rebuilt a Ka2b. He sold this to Robin Ellis who also, as part of the deal, bought Ralph's Robin Reliant. Robin Ellis, was quite a character and travelled daily from Northampton in his namesake car whenever there was flying. He loaned the glider to the club for Air Experience Flying. When it was crashed again Ralph rebuilt it once more.



As heavy as the Lak, but not quite as difficult to rig, is the 2-seater Twin-Astir. Nowadays, it is kept rigged in the hangar, but previously when daily roggings was required, it deserved the "Concrete Swan" epithet.



The Silene was one of the club training gliders. It had the unusual side-by-side layout but as can be seen it was hard work for two big fellows to squeeze into.

Chapter 23. Publications

SAILPLANE & GLIDING

JUNE - JULY 1975

40p



WHATFIELD WINGS

NORTH ESSEX & SUFFOLK
GLIDING CLUB

No. 1

December 1973

editorial

Welcome to the first edition of "Whatfield Wings", your new Club Magazine. This is a further stage of evolution of our original Newsletter, and I hope you like the attempt of something a little more professional in its presentation. That we are able to do this, and will keep within our five pence (10.00) is due to the kindness and technical help and pairing of some of our newer members, Eric Lewis. It's been fascinating too for me, moving along there were so many types of pens, scissoring etc. There are new features which will be regular items, such as Personality Parade, where a prominent club member will give us his history with an emphasis on the flying side. The life blood of the magazine and its future success depends on your contributions, so please let's hear from you. First articles, news, accounts, diary, even events (and there's normally plenty of those) will make it known to others, and the



Why then? They have a history of the most respect.

The instructors' lament

NOTES FOR GLIDER PILOTS

Eric Richards

Formerly C.E.O. of the Essex and Suffolk
Glider Club and 2nd Lt. RAF USA



S&G used Tony Bradley's photo of the Club Ka7 as its cover photo. Eric Lewis, a printer by profession, started the Club newsletter "Whatfield Wings".

NOTES FOR GLIDER PILOTS

by ERIC RICHARDS



ESSEX & SUFFOLK
GLIDING CLUB

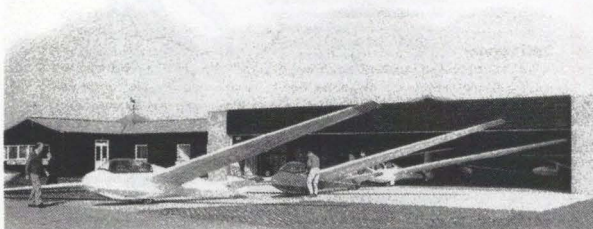
Eric Richards published a book "Notes for Glider Pilots" which ran into a second edition.

Eric's book was plagiarised by a member with his publication, who was also jailed for far more serious offences.

An information brochure was printed for publicity and information purposes.

ESSEX & SUFFOLK GLIDING CLUB

Wormingford Airfield, Fordham Road, Wormingford,
Colchester, Essex CO6 3AQ Telephone: (01206) 242596



QUESTIONS FOR GLIDER PILOTS WITH ANSWERS



CHRIS ROBINSON

Chris Bailey resumed the newsletter in the 90's, this time calling it "Winglet".

Winglet

Newsletter of the
Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club
Wormingford Airfield Wormingford Essex
01206 24 25 96

Issue 1July 1995

Your Newsletter

This is the first edition of **Winglet** the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club Newsletter.

The idea behind this newsletter is to give you the member up to date information on the activities and news of the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club on a regular basis.

We intend to publish four times a year, this edition will be followed by one in September December and March. This edition has been posted to you, but future newsletters will be available for collection in the clubhouse from the first Sunday of those months shown above. Any that are not collected after a few weeks will be put in the post so you will always get your copy but to save on postage costs please make sure you try to collect your copy and delete your name from the list

This information will not only be from the committee members with official notices and do's and don'ts but hopefully something from you the member whether it's an experience to share or just a moan about a particular thing on your mind, input from you will be just as important, remember it's your newsletter !!

We hope you will enjoy the contents and that you will be eager to contribute to it's pages in future issues.

If you have any comments or wish to know more on how to contribute please contact any member of the committee or the editor - details are enclosed.

Good Soaring !!



New Clubhouse

The new clubhouse held it's first official function on Sunday 26th March hosting the 1995 Annual General Meeting

The AGM was well attended and the new club house proved to be an excellent venue for this and future AGM's

The AGM meeting was followed a week later by a private party for Lorna and Mervin Gooch who both celebrated their 50th birthday's in April

Again the club house rebounded to lots of noise but of a more relaxed nature and many old faces from Whatfield were shown how well the club is doing since moving to Wormingford

Well done club house !!

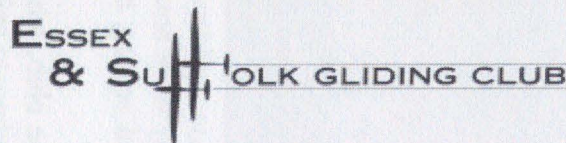


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Critical acclaim has it that the E. & S.G.C. Internet site produced by Andy Sanderson is the most efficient, interesting and useful of all web sites associated with gliding in the country.



Wormingford Airfield, Fordham Road, Wormingford,
Colchester, Essex CO6 3AQ Tel: (01206) 242596


glide@esgc.flyer.co.uk


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 Members' Info

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ESGC Chat Room

Have you ever seen a glider overhead, and wondered what it would be like to fly one?

The Essex & Suffolk Gliding Club has a policy of inviting interested members of the public to take a trial lesson with one of their qualified instructors at a reasonable price. If you wish to, you can take the controls, or you can simply enjoy the view.

[Click here](#) to buy your Trial Lesson or Day Course voucher online!
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Chapter24. Wormingford Development

With the settlement of the planning problems, and the completion of the major buildings, the club was able to develop its facilities and spend more time and money on flying. The width of the landing area at each end of the runway was increased to allow gliders to land adjacent to the launch point. All the runway grass is now cut by contract, leaving the areas around the trailers and hangar to be cut by the sit-on mower, which was brought from Whatfield. There it was used to cut all the runways! Extra trailer parking area was rented.



Additional single-seater and two-seater gliders were bought. A couple of tow-out tractors and a retrieve buggy were bought. A comfortable launch caravan with radio, lights, storage and seating made the launching easier.

All this improved the efficiency of the club, which had a snowball effect on the finances, as well as enabling members to enjoy their flying.

A cadet scheme was introduced to encourage boys and girls into gliding.

Cadets win their wings

by MARIE YEXLEY



FLYAWAY – George Green is presented with his pilot 'wings' by instructor Paul Rice.

Picture: ADRIAN RUSHTON (4276-27)

THREE cadets from the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club in Wormingford, Fordham, have qualified for their 'wings'.

Cadets James Wilson, 17, Peter Gartland, 16, and George Green, 16, underwent extensive training and carried out menial jobs – such as cleaning the toilets and sweeping – at the club so that they could earn 'flight points' enabling them to fly solo as soon as they turned 16.

Peter was the first to take to the air on his own in April this year and has made 197 flights to date.

His solo flight was followed shortly after by James in May and then George.

There are five cadets at the club – four boys and one girl – which meets on a Wednesday and Friday afternoon and all day Saturday and Sunday.



• Active women – members of West Bergholt and Fordham WI enjoying their day out at Wormingford Gliding Club on Sunday. From left, Helen Lander, Barbara Buckley, Barbara Carter, Betty Thompson, Marie Codd, Cherry Jones, Claire Short and Vivian Haley.

WI women take up the challenge

Lessons were offered so that everyone and anyone might take part.

One year, on the longest day, a dawn-to-dusk flying day was arranged. Just visible in the early morning light is the Chairman Chris Price, suitably dressed in Pyjamas and Dressing gown.



The Club competes against the other 6 Clubs in East Anglia for the Interclub Shield. Six clubs host the competitions each year (one resting) and the winner goes forward to compete in the National Final, which the Club has done three times. It also competes for the Anglia Television Trophy.

A flat site surrounded by arable land might be thought of as 'Prairie' country from which wildlife has been exterminated, but one would be wrong. Members have worked hard to develop it into one of the best-kept sites in the country. Peter Codd has planted hundreds of metres of native hedging. It is the most populous spot for skylarks in the country, which seem able to nest and raise their young on both the runway and in the adjacent fields as well as on the more likely uncultivated edges. March Hares can be seen boxing and deer occasionally come through.



The club now fits well into the local scene. Around an edge of the field is a public footpath that is well used by ramblers and the farmer allows the riding of horses under the EAFR scheme and both fit in mutually well with our operation. A viewing area with parking has been set up with notices at the entrance welcoming visitors. We are proud of the Club, but it has not been easy.

Not only is the site ideally placed in East Anglia, with a 50 metre wide, 1 kilometre long runway, its facilities are the envy of many clubs. Under the chairmanship of Paul Foulger, an even wider landing strip is being put down to grass so that launches will be never be affected by returning gliders. Negotiations are in hand with the landlord to extend the runway, so that 2000-foot winch launches might become the norm.

Chapter 25 Retrieves & Outlanding

An American air traffic controller, Tommy Cardot, was posted to Wattisham in 1976 and flew gliders from Whatfield. He declared (an official procedure for a badge flight including a witnessed written statement) that he was going to Graffham Water Reservoir in Rutland. He returned to Whatfield with a picture of The Wash, saying, "I sure had no idea that your Graffham Water was so large". He got in difficulty once in cloud when he flew on a reciprocal compass heading (went the opposite way) and infringed the Heathrow zone. He was able to use his mates in air traffic to get himself out that predicament.



An aerobatic power pilot had an airstrip neighbouring to Whatfield leading up to his house and swimming pool. It looks as if this outlanding towards the pool stopped just in time. As is usual on these occasions the pilot claimed it was perfect judgement.

Navigation errors in attempting to get to Duxford accounted for at least three memorable flights. Duxford at the time of these narratives was also home to the Cambridge Gliding Club and a convenient goal for one's first cross country flight. Duxford should have been highly visible with many planes lined up as an Air Museum including the first Concorde.

Neville Bleach, a solicitor good with words, landed at Mildenhall, the American Air base, instead of Duxford. He climbed the control tower and used his considerable powers of persuasion to let his crew come and retrieve him instead of being put in the guardhouse. It could have been a grave infringement, but it happened that the Commander needed a bit of legal advice in a civilian matter which Neville was able to supply. On leaving the tower he saw the operations board and amongst the sorties of the Phantoms, A10s and Hercules was an entry "one small red glider".

A pilot attempting his Silver Distance radioed back that he was over Duxford but couldn't see any airliners, only a Lion cut into the chalk hillside. Members radioed back truthfully, with some mirth, that he was over Whipsnade Zoo. The photo is from an S & G cover and is not our glider, but one from a local gliding club who use the Lion as a convenient identification marker.



Another serious intrusion into civilian airspace was John.....'s landing at Stansted. He was let off with a caution since neither Stansted Radar had seen him approaching nor did the Control Tower see him landing.

Most outlandings involve the pilot in little more than staying in a field with one's hair full of straw waiting for a retrieve crew, contemplating why one's own glider is on the ground when other gliders can be seen in the sky.





Sometimes getting a glider out of a field needs more manpower, like this ditch crossing.

One pilot was flying to North Weald and navigated by counting off the towns as he flew along the A12 road. He must have missed a few as he radioed back that everything was built-up ahead and the buses were all double-deckers and were red. He was advised to land immediately, which he did in the car park at Gants Hill School, Greater London. By the time his retrieve arrived the car park was locked.

The next time the same pilot decided to try for his Silver C, he decided to go to Duxford. However, as he approached, he saw Concorde on the apron, and having had the embarrassment of the red buses and had heard the tales of people landing at active airfields, he hurriedly turned back home. When he got back he was told that he had successfully navigated to Duxford where there is a permanent static display of aircraft including the first Concorde. If he had landed there he would have gained his Silver C.

Your author landed beside a crematorium, where he went to phone. The robed priest at the exit was giving condolences to tearful relatives in black. Being unsuitably dressed in shorts and T-shirt, he discreetly skirted the party but even so was given strange looks. What he had forgotten was that he had liberally coated his face, arms and legs in white sun block so the grieving party must have thought he had risen from the dead.

Fortunately, there have been few crashes. The worst was Noreen's. Wearing only a tee shirt and shorts, and quite badly injured, she had the presence of mind to wrap her parachute around her to conserve heat and to keep calling for help. She had crashed in the parklands of Heveningham Hall, then owned by wealthy Arabs who, unfortunately, had closed the area to the public. Luckily, there was a trespasser in the grounds who heard what she thought to be a peacock calling, went to investigate and rescued her.



Many outlandings are the culmination of a badge flight or of a declared destination such as John Gilbert (snr) seen by his Oly in its early silver and yellow livery.

Seething airfield was a favourite destination for a silver C badge 50 km distance from Whatfield.

When Ralph Brooker was retrieved from Seething airfield after his Silver C distance, Tony Sutton towed him back in the white Tiger Moth. It was already dusk but the lights were on at RAF Wattisham so both pilots knew where they were. But as they neared Whatfield, Ralph saw a field in which the stubble had been set on fire to get rid of stubble and pests, the heat being a wonderful source of thermals for glider pilots. So Ralph released and had an exhilarating flight after dusk. He knew Tony Sutton was an expert at finding his way in the dark and all he had to do was to stay in the thermal and watch the white tug land. For once, Tony missed the Whatfield airstrip and headed in the wrong direction. Naturally, Tony soon retraced his track and landed. Ralph could see the white tug and could follow it down, thankful for an after dark thermal to keep him airborne.

One May day when there was a strong easterly wind and good thermals, Tristram Ll-Jones and Colin Smith successfully flew down to the West Country in what is called a "downwind dash". Both had tales to tell of their outlandings. Tristram left his BG153 glider safely in a Dartmoor field and returned by train to get the trailer and help. However, when he got back to the glider next day it had been damaged by cows licking off the paint with their rough tongues. Colin had arranged a retrieve before he left so that the trailer was already well on its way by the time he landed. After his exhausting flight he decided to rest under the wing and went to sleep. A lady reported that an aeroplane had crashed and there was a dead pilot alongside. The first Colin knew was when he was surrounded by the police whilst being prodded by a fireman to see if he was still alive.

Chapter 26. The Embarrassed Question

If you are in the glider for a long time, how do you go to the toilet?

There are a number of answers given in the Club. The usual one is that one waits till one lands and dashes behind a bush. Unfortunately, few airfields have bushes and one is committed to turning ones back to the spectators.

Many people have to land because they can't wait any longer. In fact, one of the badge flights is for a duration of five hours, which is as much a test of bladder control as of flying skill. Not only that, in order to avoid dehydration, especially when the weather is hot, a pilot is well advised to drink at least a litre of water in the flight.

Once, Peter Codd, after a long flight, landed at Hethel aerodrome, which was owned by Lotus cars. They used it for testing but wanted to keep their new models secret, so had various security devices installed. Unbeknown to Peter, during and after the landing he was on video camera. This zoomed in closer and closer as he jumped out to have a Pee. The Security Guards were delighted to replay it to show Peter.



Security Guard at Hethel airfield, home of Lotus cars.

Some gliders are equipped to carry water ballast to increase the glider performance. This makes the glider too heavy for landing and the water has to be dumped, which is quite spectacular. An uninitiated onlooker asking what's happening is sometimes told that the pilot can't wait any longer and is blowing it out as steam.



Elvin Hibbard tells of flying for his Diamond height. At 20000 feet he just had to go so he wee'd into the only receptacle he had, his pouch type spectacle case, and emptied it out of the direct vision panel, whereupon it froze down the side of the fuselage. On landing, during the customary congratulations on his badge success, an observer saw stream of ice down the side and wiped his hand along the ice and before Elvin could say anything had licked it saying, "Ice is the purest water you can get".

There are cathetas and rubber venturi suction devices that are beyond the technical scope of this book.

A different embarrassment for such as Eddie was to deploy the parachute before taking off.



Chapter 27. Logos

Over the years, the club has been associated with all sorts of designs emblems and logos, from the Americans at War to the local opponents.



3RD SCOUTING FORCE

British Gliding Association

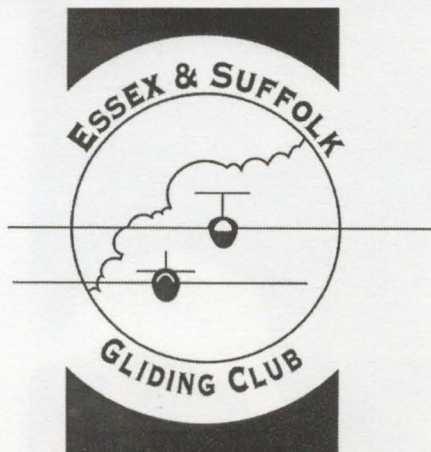


Fédération
Aéronautique
Internationale





I've been gliding at





Display Cabinet

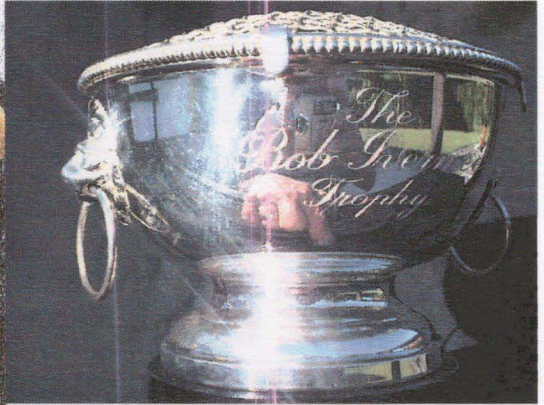


Chris Bailey's E & S Beeny hat reflected in the canopy in Australia. Is that why it's upside down and back to front and mirror imaged?

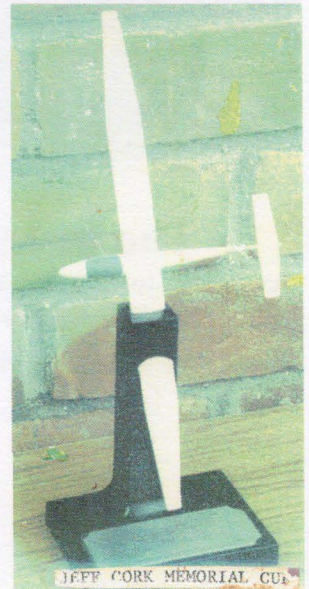
Chapter 28. Trophies

Over the years, a number of trophies have been donated for various exploits, some prestigious, some humorous. All are held for one year.

The Bob Ivermee Rose Bowl. Bob Ivermee is seen here being congratulated by Jonathon Abbess after his first solo. The bowl, given by Iris in his memory, is awarded to a similarly promising pilot just qualified to go cross-country.



The Jeff Cork Trophy is for the longest handicapped flight. Jeff is seen with Swallow syndicate partner Colin Smith who donated the model glider trophy in his memory.



The Presidents Cup, donated by Eric Richards, is for the fastest flight around a 200 km triangle, rounding East Dereham and Ely Cathedral.

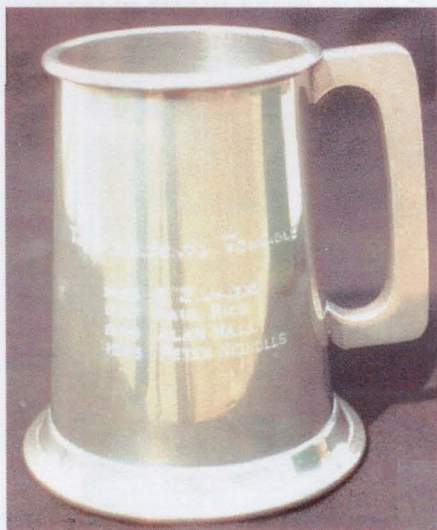


The 100 km Trophy is for the fastest flight around a 106 km triangle, currently rounding Newmarket and Rattlesden Gliding Club.



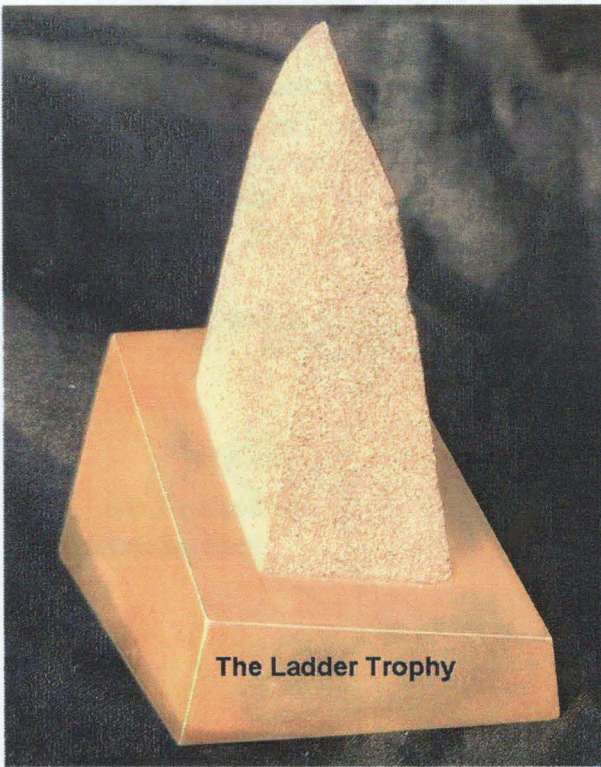
The Instructors Cup.

Awarded to the most promising new solo pilot. The winner keeps this cup so a new one is bought each year.



The Club Ladder Trophy.

The trophy itself is a piece of granite picked up on a gliding expedition to the Long Mynd, and may not look very imposing, but it is the Club's most prestigious award. It is for a member's best two flights from the site. Although height gains qualify, it has always been won for cross-country flights, declared in advance on a handicap basis.



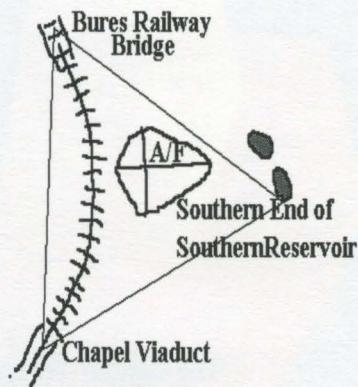
The Members Cup

Dave Gilder donated the Members Cup. It is awarded to the club member, other than a committee member, who has made the greatest contribution to the well being of the club, often for thankless unseen work.



The Tiny Triangle Trophy.

Donated by Bob Adams, it is for the fastest handicapped flight around the Triangle of which each side is only 6 km. The pilot may fly as many or as few sides as they choose- the time is measured from take off to landing. This has been won in a 2-seater with a pupil under instruction.



The Sodit Trophy.

Awarded to the person who may have said something like it during or after the exploit that fits the title. Typical instances are: achieving a cross country badge flight without a working barograph to prove it, landing wheels up, taking off with the tail dolly on, or failing to get back to the site after a long flight by only a few fields. One of the best example of the last being Robbie Lockett who despite flying 496 km of a 500 km task to win the Jeff Cork Trophy must have muttered an expletive worst than 'Sodit' when landing a few fields short of home.



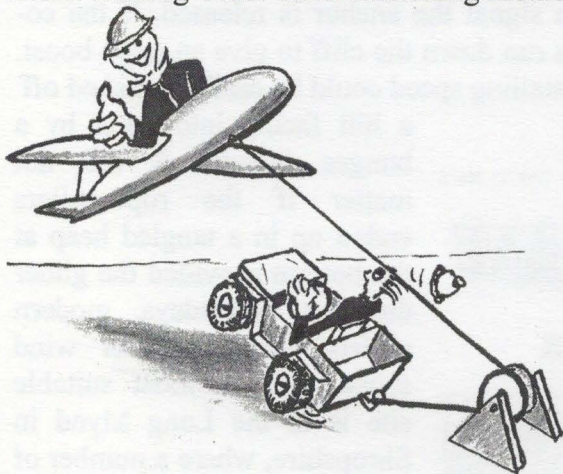
Chapter 29. Expeditions

Expeditions were made to other sites to experience different terrain, hill sites, mountain flying, weather and launching methods.

In the early 60's, as related in Chapter 2, Eric took the first expedition to RAF Swanton Morley in Norfolk to fly their Kranich. One of the cadets there was Air Cadet Paul Robinson, seen here showing his little sister a glider, on an Open Day. He was to later join the Club and become an Instructor at Whatfield and later a professional Instructor. A photo of him many years later appears in this chapter.



In 1973 the club flew two weekends at North Weald, the home of the Essex Gliding Club. Their launching method of reverse auto-tow was new to our members, the principle being that glider and tow car accelerate towards each other. This club had a large membership, but the site was being increasingly threatened because of the adjacent London Stansted Airport.



The tale of the retrieve from North Weald can now, 25 years later, safely be told.

A pair of tugs was sent to tow the two club gliders back to Whatfield after the end of flying. As sometimes happens, it was almost dusk when the gliding finished at North Weald so it was decided that the most experienced pilots should lead in the first combination and the second combination should follow in formation. Thus CFI Elvin Hibbard flew the first glider towed by Tony Sutton. However Tony also had to ferry a member back as a passenger. Tony kept low to navigate by the landmarks he knew well, but

this was the undoing of the passenger who panicked and pleaded with Tony to cast off the glider and land. Of course, this would have been disastrous for the occupants of all four machines. His passenger, who shall be nameless, panicked the whole flight, fearing they would be lost, having no radio, afraid they would be put in prison, demanding to know how they would find the Whatfield strip in the dark and even if they found it how would they land on it. To answer the last, Tony told him "We'll go and circle over RAF Wattisham until they put the lights on". This was unnecessary as the Whatfield members were aware of the situation and lined the runway with their car headlights. Unfortunately Tony's tug had an exhaust which emitted a very bright flame that was almost blinding to Elvin, the glider pilot, who had been looking straight at it for half an hour. Tony knew that Elvin's eyes would have to get used to the dark so climbed up to give him time to get accustomed. This confused both the second combination and also the Whatfield watchers who thought their headlights had not been seen, but again disconcerted the passenger. Never-the-less all four aircraft landed safely, but the passenger never spoke to Tony for two long years.

A bungee launch needs a hill facing into wind. Four people on each end of an elasticated rope attached to the anchored glider walk down the hill to stretch the rope and at a given signal the anchor is released. If the co-ordination is right, the rope-pullers run down the cliff to give an extra boost. In the early days, gliders with low stalling speed could be easily launched off

a hill facing into wind by a bungee launch. It did not matter if the rope-pullers ended up in a tangled heap at the bottom provided the glider did not. Nowadays, modern gliders need a higher wind speed and the most suitable site is at the Long Mynd in Shropshire, where a number of members have launched their gliders. Compared to a winch launch it feels most sedate. The illustrative photo is from the very first gliding magazine cover.

Sept. 6, 1930.

Vol. I. No. 1.

THE SAILPLANE

Price
3d.

AND GLIDER



THE PRETTIEST YET.—The "Fafnir" which has been designed by Herr Lippisch to replace the "Wien." This machine piloted by Greuchoff flew with the "Wien" piloted by Krennfeld in the difficult out and return flight round the Hohenberg.



The duration and height elements of the international badges are more easily obtained in hilly country. Lift encountered upwind of a ridge can maintain the glider for as long as the wind blows. Downwind of mountains, phenomenal lift (and also dangerous sink) is generated, marked by stationary lenticular wave clouds.

As confirmed by the 1st April date on this photo, Paul Robinson was skiing with his family in America when they saw this classic wave cloud. He rushed to the nearest glider airport, and after a check flight, climbed to 20,000 feet.



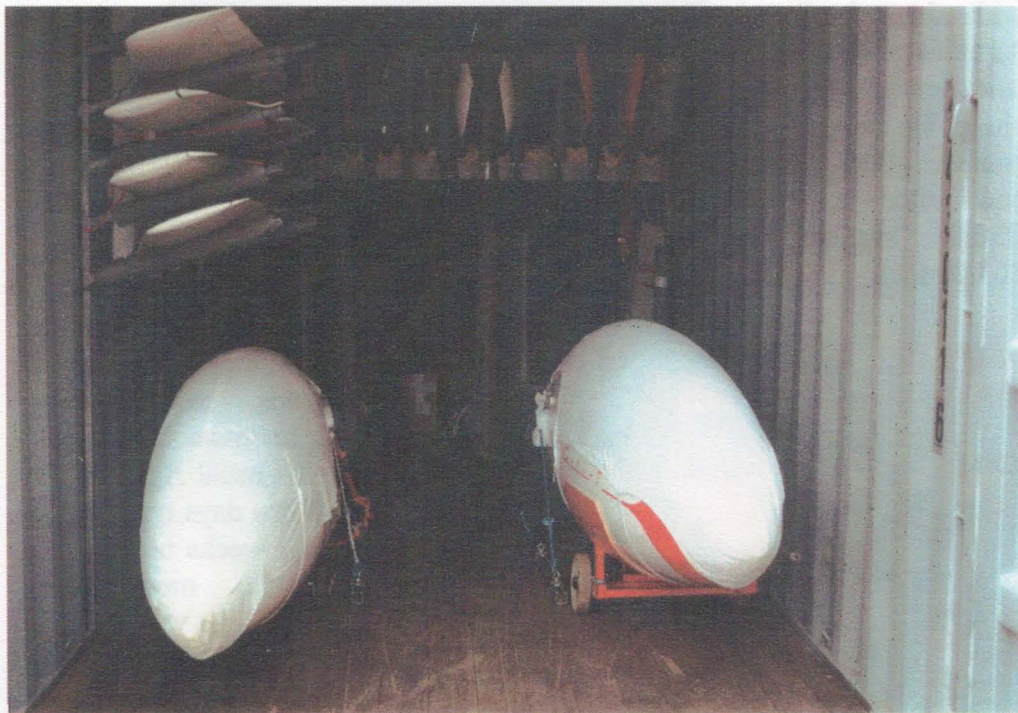
When he got back to our club, the paper work did not arrive, so members decided he must have been playing his usual April Fool's jokes. When days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months, he must have thought the joke was on him until confirmation of his Diamond Height was eventually received.

In the 1970s-80s the club ran big expeditions, taking both club and private gliders away to other sites where training continued. It was pretty onerous on the CFI and his Instructors, so it was no holiday for them. When CFI Angus took an expedition to Portmoak in Scotland, within a few hours on the first day, three gliders had landed on the top of the local mountain called The Bishop. The trailers could not be brought up to the gliders. This meant an exhausting task of carrying the dismantled gliders across and down

the hill to the nearest retrieve position. It is not surprising that nowadays the qualifications to fly elsewhere have been upgraded.

However, gliders were taken on expeditions further and further afield. Expeditions were made, to Challock in Kent, Usk in South Wales and Aboyne in Deeside, Scotland, the IS29 went to France, the ASW19 to Spain and the Discus to the Alps.

The furthest that any one has taken his own glider on an expedition is to Australia. Chris Bailey shared this specially fitted container with five others and shipped his ASW20 for use at Benalla in New South Wales, where he achieved 650 km flights in the hot Aussie weather.



Chapter 30. Club Champions

Vivien's own article from *Sailplane & Gliding* is self-explanatory.

VIVIEN HALEY

Sunday, May 4 and I was up at 6.45am to a blue sky and high winds. Oh well, I thought, not much good for a cross-country today!

Driving to the gliding site at 7.30 cumulus was appearing everywhere. This was not a good sign, it meant that it would probably over-convect by lunchtime!

On arrival at the site, I was met with great gloom as very strong winds from the SE meant taking off on the short runway. Only one problem – “friendly” local farmer does not like us and has erected 8ft concrete posts at the end of the runway. Therefore, no flying today!

Paul Robinson, who is great on optimism, said to me “Why don’t you do a downwind dash and try for the UK women’s 100km goal? It’s only 83km/h and has been held for 29 years. You could fly to Crowland!” As we obviously would not be able to launch a glider, I looked at my map, smoked my barograph, put film in camera and nattered as is the way at all gliding sites.

At 9.30am a committee meeting started in the clubhouse and a few of us were left outside to contemplate the beautiful cumulus clouds and the strong crosswinds.

“Come for a ride to Ipswich Airport to buy a map” suggested Colin and off I went for an hour or so.

On return, no gliding yet but the wind had veered to 170°. I then changed my destination to Langham Airfield on the Norfolk coast but this was only 98km from our site, so chose Raydon Airfield as my start point – both are deserted airfields.

By this time, Pete Wilby, our ex-CFI, had arrived and he offered to tow me off (towards the concrete posts which had never been done before!) Up until now I had quite happily been planning this flight (since I wasn’t going anywhere) – now my tummy started to do peculiar things.

The Sporting Code and Official Observer’s booklet were scoured but, although an OO could drive to a certain point at Raydon Airfield and I could be observed crossing the startline below 3000ft, record attempts were not able to accept a remote finish and timing by the barograph.

I heaved a big sigh of relief and had another cup of coffee. My partner, Kevin, ‘phoned home to say he would be back for lunch.

The committee meeting finished and I told Paul the news that the record could not be attempted as there would be no one at Langham Airfield to observe my arrival. “No problem” he informed me, “we’ll get an OO there!” and rushed off to ‘phone Tibenham to see what conditions were like in Norfolk. I tried to remonstrate with Paul but all to no avail – he’s like a bulldog when he gets the bit between his teeth!

I felt decidedly sick by now and sat down to have another look at the map, seriously, this time. Kevin said quietly that if I wanted to go, he would rig the glider, a Pirat, and not to worry about that side of things.

I went to the loo!

By now, everyone seemed to be involved as nothing else was happening and this was exciting, wasn’t it? More calculations were made, distances and heights of airfields measured and a declaration board photographed. I couldn’t do that, of course – my hands were shaking so much that I could not hold the camera.

OLD RECORD BROKEN

Vivien, who has always faintly disapproved of separate records for men and women, was bullied into attempting to beat the UK single-seater women’s 100km goal held for 29 years by Rika Harwood.



Vivien photographed after her record flight. She flies her syndicate Pirat at the Essex & Suffolk GC and in her seven years’ gliding has a Silver C and Gold height with Diamond goal ambitions. A teacher with three grown sons, Vivien also has a PPL.

Soon after 2.00pm Paul and Jonathan Abbess, the OO, set off to race to Langham Airfield. The trailer would follow after I had started. I was committed. Angus, our CFI, drove to Raydon Airfield to officially observe the start. Everything that could be done, had been done. The fact that no one knew what the conditions were like for soaring didn’t seem to matter – it looked OK!

I visited the loo again, packed my handbag and crossword puzzle for when I had to sit in a field for four hours waiting for a retrieve and towed the glider to the launch point.

Nervousness gone _____
Just concentrating _____

Everyone watched with interest to see if we impaled ourselves on the concrete posts at the end of the runway. No problem. Pete held the tug down until the last minute. I was all right now, nervousness gone, just concentrating on seeing where the lift was during the tow. It seemed very close to the ground which wasn’t a great deal of help! Pete waved me off in the correct position at

the correct height and I turned to cross the startline and headed towards Wattisham Airfield and Stowmarket. I encountered no lift where expected and had lost 1000ft! I made a decision – it was not good enough for a cross-country and I turned back towards the site. I felt bad. All the effort everyone had made, but it was better to land at the site than in a field 15 miles away.

When I was almost back at the site at 1500ft, I found some zero sink and tried a turn. Mmmmm, 1/2kt, 1kt, 2-4kt up. I climbed up to 3300ft and into cloud. By this time the wind had taken me downwind of Wattisham and I decided to go. I thought that I had blown the record attempt, but I would treat it as a normal cross-country flight. I kept a northerly heading and all my landmarks came up where I expected but, so very quickly! I found the lift difficult to work and was down to 1400-1600ft on three more occasions throughout the flight with beautiful fields picked out. I would fly from directly upwind of a superb looking cloud and not be able to find the lift anywhere, then the vario would start to beep at zero and I would have to scratch and work it until it became 2-4kt up. My language was unprintable! When I reached 3000ft I would set off in lift on the downwind side of the cloud, but altering my speed to whatever was necessary to fly level, then sink

and the same pattern again. The lift did not seem very good and the whole flight took place between 1400-3000ft.

I was climbing at 2000ft over Snetterton and looked at my map to see how far I had travelled in 35min. Mmmm, I was half way – I was still in with a chance. I continued on up to 3000ft and then set off again.

Shipdham, Swanton Morley – I had no time to admire the view further afield – all concentration was on staying airborne, on my immediate vicinity and navigation.

Just west of Swanton Morley, at 2000ft. I looked at my map again to see exactly where Langham Airfield was in relation to the coast. There was a spit which pointed directly at the airfield and as I knew that I would have no time to spare looking for the airfield, I headed slightly east so that Swanton Morley was directly behind me, before continuing on a northerly heading. This way I should fly directly over the top of the airfield.

I was flying at 1800ft and could see the spit, but no airfield. Where was it? I knew that I was going to land in a field! I was flying in reduced sink, bits of zero and sink. I did not think I was going to make it but it did not seem worth turning in anything. I still could not see the airfield. At last, there it was – it had been hidden by a cloud shadow and there was the car just moving up the runway. That must be it! I flew at 40kt in reduced sink just willing myself to stay airborne. There was not time (and I was too low) to get out the map and final glide calculator. 1500ft and I knew I was going to make it. I lowered the nose and crossed the runway at 1200ft.

I had taken 1hr 9min and four thermals to fly 102.69km and did not think I had broken the record but was just very happy to have completed the flight.

Paul and Jonathan came roaring up with big grins on their faces. They thought I was still in with a chance of the record. Jonathan was still recovering from being driven by Paul at break-neck speed and was feeling decidedly delicate!

It turned out that I had flown at a speed of 89.30km/h and had to buy everyone a drink!

Paul Rice was our first Club member to achieve a coveted 500 km 'Diamond Distance' in this country. This was in 1991 in his Libelle, not the open cockpit Prefect below. He flew to Stratford-on-Avon, photographing the railway station as proof, then to Didcot, photographing the Power station and on to Oakham before landing back at Wormingford. He was annoyed that on passing the Rugby radio masts, on both the out and return, instead of signalling height changes, his electric variometer was transmitting BBC music and chat programmes. Nowadays, as mentioned in Chapter 26, pilots are more aware of the importance of drinking plenty of water. Paul realised later that, as he only took a couple of apples, he must have got dehydrated. He knows this affected his decision-making and without any Satellite aid, he said his navigation suffered after the first five hours.

This pioneering flight was the spur for others to achieve successful 500 km flights.

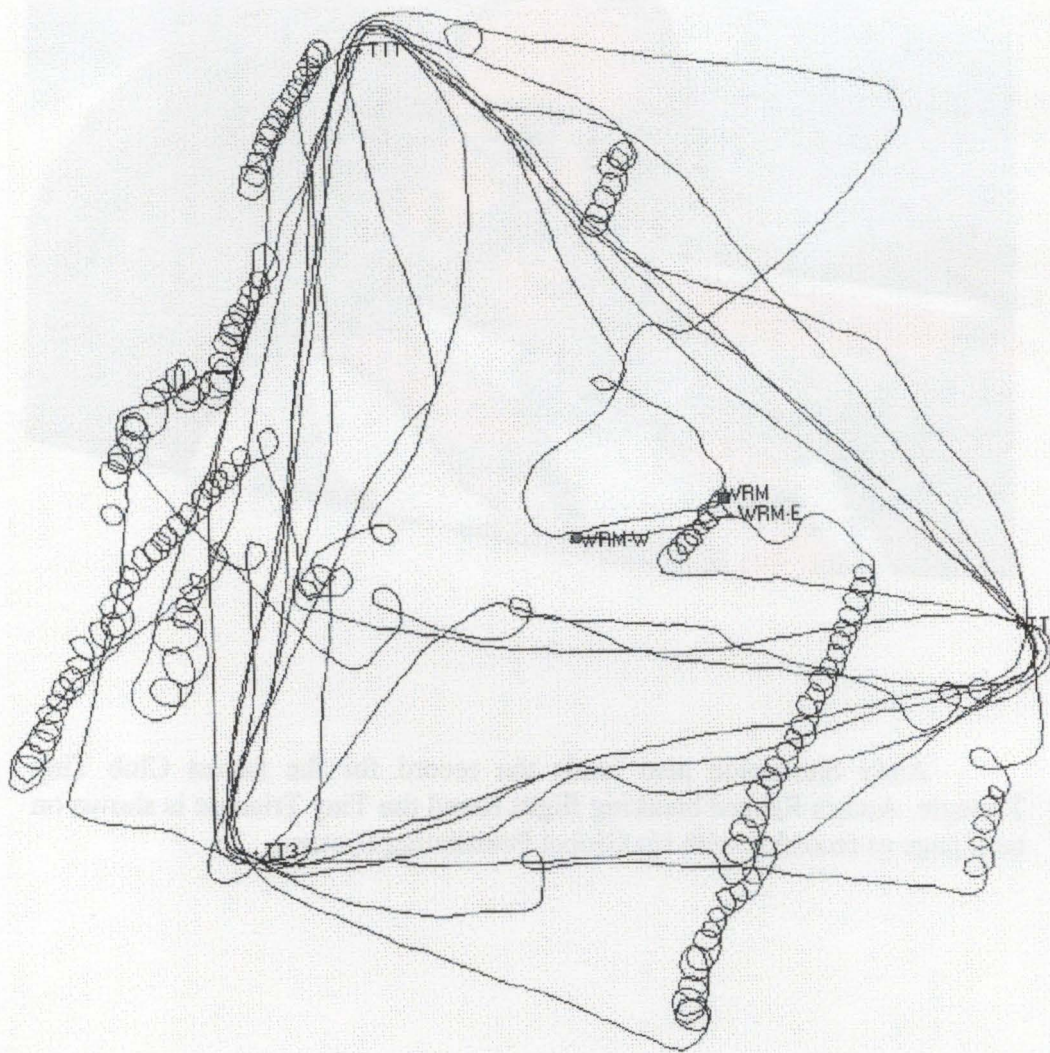


The record distance to date is that of Andy Sanderson who flew 573 km in 2001 in his Vega.



Andy Sanderson also holds the record for the fastest Club Tiny Triangle. Andy's Record breaking flight round the Tiny Triangle is shown on next page as recorded with his Global Positioning System.

It was completed in 2 hours 16 minutes and from it one can count how many sides of the triangle he completed and also see how he struggled in some thermals to regain height



ready been gained.

the Club's
the years



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Unknown cartoonist 'I just love that silence'.
Sailplane and Gliding
Boxted Airfield Historical Group

The order has no significance and I acknowledge a disproportionate effort put in by some contributors.



Bob Adams, born in 1934, joined and learned to fly with the club in 1977 and remains an enthusiastic member. The history is told in a light-hearted, non-technical style. Anecdotes and over 200 illustrations, mostly in colour, make a fascinating story. A limited edition produced at cost.

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