



Soaring Times



NEWSLETTER OF THE NENE VALLEY GLIDING CLUB

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1. Editorial

Another year has passed with good flying at NVGC. Beth has covered our activities in her article.

Sadly, we have lost two of our friends this year and their obituaries are below. Although not a current member, Chris Armstrong was often to be seen flying with us and my last memories of him are the two 'fun' flights we took together in the T21b in September. He was the person whom we must thank for the new workshop. It has been suggested that we call it 'The Armstrong Suite', but if any member has a better idea please let Alan Wyse know and he will put it to the committee. The new workshop is turning into a superb facility, thanks to the efforts of Alan, Ron, JB and others – see Alan's report below.

It is interesting to note that of the 12 initial 2013 Gliding Scholarship students, 10 completed the course and 5 are now capable pilots and valuable club members who are now helping to run the club. When the scheme started we did not expect such a high retention rate, with university being

up-coming for many, but we seem to be doing something right that such a high percentage have stayed on and continue to progress with their flying.

We can move into 2017 with a highly optimistic view of our Club's progress and future potential. All ab-initio training is now being done on our 'glass' 2-seaters and it is good to see the NVGC with more modern aircraft than when I joined over 6 years ago. Hopefully that progress will continue.



Nice photo of 'LPO' landing on the short strip Photo by Paul Capitain.

The AGM will be on the 11th March 2017 with the annual dinner & awards later the same month.

It just remains for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a great New Year.

2. Chairman's Chat

It is with great sadness that I write this, the day after Chris Armstrong's funeral. He was a great friend to our Club and an excellent Instructor. He will be sorely missed by many of our members, and of course his family will be in our thoughts over Christmas.

John White, Brian Palmer and I had a meeting on Thursday with Adrian Sale from Strawsons, our landlords, supposedly about a new lease and higher rent but, to our surprise, that was not discussed and he offered to sell our 36 acre airfield to us. John White and I have set up a small sub-committee to oversee the discussions with Strawsons before any offer is made. This offer will, of course be discussed by the Management Committee and put forward for final approval at our A.G.M. At this stage, buying the airfield may not be cost neutral compared with our existing rent, but I feel that we must go forward with discussions on the purchase. If we don't then the whole airfield side of R.A.F Upwood could be sold to someone else, and we could be evicted. The Management Committee discussed this last Saturday and it was decided unanimously that we should purchase our airfield if we can agree the right terms and cost.

Our Club membership has increased over the last few years and we now have 47 full members, 27 younger pilots [juniors] and 12 social members which makes 86 in total.

Mary and I would like to wish everybody a Happy Christmas and may next year be a great Flying Year!

3. **CFI's Section** by Steve Jarvis

FESTIVE GREETINGS

As usual all the instructors have been kept busy & the following have flown solo Toby Temple, Zoe Woodward & Paul Johnstone (re-solo after 30 years), so well done to those.

It is that time when annual flight reviews take place, some might call it a check. Well, yes, that is a big part of it. The instructors are only trying to keep you safe. However, look at it as a way of a refresher & hopefully you will learn something, but more importantly please enjoy your flights with our instructors.

As you will know by now our Ka7/13 DOX has been taken out of service. Hopefully this will be short term & the spin part of the annual review can start.

The club's Operations Manual is being revised as we speak & when the changes are made they will be communicated out to the members. One change which has just been made is that the person who attaches the cable on to a glider for the launch will now run the wing & control the whole launch.

Launch Point Controller: Over the years several systems have been in place & all failed to a certain degree. After discussions with the instructors, a training program is being put together & will be rolled out to ALL members, hopefully during the shut down. We must address this issue as it seems the same people do it week on week and we need to share the load around all members. IT IS A BGA REQUIREMENT FOR A LPC ON ALL FLYING DAYS

I would like to thank you all for a most enjoyable flying year & wish you all a Merry Christmas

Steve Jarvis

4. **Aircraft Notes** by Alan Wyse

The Junior and both Grob 2-seaters continue in service with no immediate issues other than the repair of the undercarriage doors for the Astir. Richard Aylesbury now has the new hinges for the doors and will be rebuilding them ready for refitting, probably during the January shut-down.

It was with considerable reluctance that I had to make the decision to take the K7/13 DOX and the K8 FHN out of service last month. Up to that time the glue issue had not presented us with too many problems other than CEX, and we anticipated that the K7/13 and the K8 would continue in service for some time to come. However, the issue deepened when part of a main spar that had been stored in our hangar for some years fell apart when cut by Trevor Nash, revealing the presence of pink Kaurit glue in the spar construction. Previously we had expected to find this glue only in the minor structural areas – wing ribs and trailing edges etc.

The problem we (and the BGA) now have is that there is currently no known non-destructive method for determining the presence of Kaurit glue in spars, and more importantly, its condition regarding spar structural integrity. With this level of doubt around our 2 wooden gliders I had no real option than to take them out of service for the time being. We await the deliberations of the BGA Technical Committee for guidance on the way forward.

I have to conclude that all owners of Schleicher K-series wooden gliders should very carefully consider their options before continuing to fly their machines.

The club owes a considerable debt of thanks to the late Chris Armstrong for arranging the donation of the new workshop to NVGC from the RAF GSA at Wittering. Chris had persevered with the RAF authorities in support of our need for a decent aircraft maintenance workshop, and in memory of him we are proposing to name the workshop after him with something like "The Armstrong Suite" (Brian Palmer's suggestion). Any other appropriate suggestions from any one?

Work has proceeded apace to prepare the workshop for use, and although we still have some way to go to completion good progress is being made. New LED strip lights will provide superb illumination throughout the entire building (thanks to Dave Mansfield), Roly Taylor has kindly donated a desk and 2 chairs for the office, Ron has fitted the office wall, door, various cupboards, workbench etc. Di has kindly donated a large pile of storage bins and a filing cabinet, which will all be very useful. We still have roof water leaks to repair, the damaged side wall panel to repair and a rotten end door to replace, and a ramp to the main doors to construct, but it will be useable for the first Annual Inspection in January which will be the Twin Acro LPO.

That's all for now, all that remains for me to do is to wish everyone at NVGC, your partners/wives and families a very Happy Christmas.

Alan Wyse.

5. Ground Equipment Stuff by Peter Valentine

The work schedule/task list for Shutdown Month is almost complete and will be displayed on the board in the clubhouse shortly.

There is a lot to be done this year with the winches needing a re-paint as well as the caravan and part of one of the Land Rovers. In addition, the twin-drum paying-on roller system needs a lot of attention plus all the normal servicing and checking.

May I ask, therefore, for a maximum effort from all members. Roly, Nigel & Michael have offered to run the painting team(s), so please contact them as well as me if painting is your thing. Brushes will be provided so all you need is a pair of overalls. I cannot over-stress the need for a lot of help during January.

Start time on each working day (Thursdays, Saturdays & Sundays) will nominally be 09-30 and if I am not there on any day please look and see what needs doing. Please sign off each specific task as you complete it. That way we don't duplicate any task.

6. Our Gliding Year, by Beth Aston

2016 has been a packed year for us, from first solos to fantastic competition results and a new fleet of club gliders. We kicked off the year with our annual maintenance shutdown in preparation for the busy soaring season to come. This is a busy and important period for us as we take the time to repair and renew our ground equipment that keeps us flying throughout the year. The early months of spring often provide the perfect weather for training flights, albeit the air time rarely lasts more than a few minutes, it gives trainees the opportunity to practice their take offs and all important landings.

Come June, we were ready to welcome our newest batch of keen learners from the local college. Now in its third year our scholarship program that runs alongside Ramsey Abbey College continues to be a resounding success. This year six lucky students were offered the opportunity to learn to fly gliders with us to solo standard.

August saw our annual task week take place. Task week is an opportunity for solo pilots to take to the skies to complete a range of tasks, ranging from cross countries to personal bests. We also hosted our first 4 Clubs Young Pilots challenge, a competition designed to bring together young glider pilots from Upwood, Bicester, Dunstable and Cambridge, which proved to be a resounding success for all involved.

As the soaring season came to an end in September, the personal achievements didn't end there. Five young pilots earned their wings as they took the sky to complete their first solo's. Congratulations Zoe Woodward, Zoe Fowler, Sam Lee, Toby Temple and Jordan Keilty.

It may be cold and dark by 4pm but life at Nene Valley Gliding Club doesn't stop. Look up and you'll still see us flying in the skies above Upwood and Ramsey right through to Christmas.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the continued support and hard work of the members of Nene Valley Gliding Club old and new. Whether it be repainting a wing, repairing a broken clutch, cutting grass or cooking bacon sarnies, their dedication ensures that we will be gracing the skies in years to come.

Bethany Aston (Publicity Member)

Can I also mention the two club expeditions to Eden Soaring and Halesland. Both were good adventures for the members who went..... Ed.

7. Blind Landing by RoMo

C.1960's Late Autumn, RAF Henlow, 616VGS. Runway 21.

On the last flight of the day, it was the practice to pull the cable out as far as possible to achieve maximum height on the launch. Anything over 1000ft was a bonus from our low powered winches. The a/c was a T21b Sedburgh and my passenger was a cadet who had worked hard all day. We took off and climbed to over 1000ft, released the cable, had a look around and found we could not see the ground.

In the time it took to climb to the top of the launch a bank of fog had rolled in and covered the field. All we could see were the hangers and control tower looming out above the fog line. The fog looked about 10-15ft deep, but with the top of control tower visible and the hangers at the end of 21 we knew where we had to land even though we could not see the ground.

We knew then that the last part we would be blind. We set the circuit up as normal with a long approach, as we got closer to the fog bank we were both shouting "we are coming in, we are coming in", at least with an open cockpit we stood a good chance we would be heard.

I brought the T21 in as slowly as possible in case we hit anything and as we entered the fog bank I flared for landing and hoped for the best. It seemed an age before the a/c arrived with a slight bump, but we were down and in one piece. With a lot of shouting the ground crew found us and towed us back carefully to the hanger.

Why did the winch driver not curtail the launch when the fog rolled in? He took the correct action to let the aircraft get to a safe height so the pilot could assess the situation rather than killing the power and giving us a launch failure. This would have given us even more to worry about and little time to assess the situation.

This airfield at certain times of the year is prone to fog. But in all my years of flying at Henlow I have never seen the fog come down so quickly.

Roger Morrisroe

8. Operations Manual & Safety Matters

As mentioned above by Steve, our new safety Officer, Roly Taylor, is revising the Operations manual to bring it up to date and simplify some aspects. When he has it more in hand he will issue a report detailing what has been done.

LPC training will take place during the annual shutdown.

It has become noticeable that, of late, a rather lax attitude to winch driving has developed. To be clear, only signed-off winch drivers may drive the winch(es) for which they are cleared. More care must be taken in all aspects of winch driving and cable retrieving. The rules will be re-stated in the revised Ops. Manual and any re-training may be carried out by the approved winch instructors who will all be listed in the Manual.

If anyone has any concerns about any aspect of safety he/she must contact Roly so that he can address this.

9. Gliding Scholarship News

The new starters have all settled well into their training and Dillon Bennett has started on Sundays and is also making fine progress. Joe Pye will be starting on Sundays at the beginning of February as now that Paul Johnstone has re-soloed there is a training slot available.

10. 25 Years at Nene Valley G.C. by Dave Mansfield

This year is my 25th year at Nene Valley GC. Looking back over those past years, I have seen many changes. The Club ethos has always been “Ab Labor Venire Voluptas”, roughly translated “through Work comes Pleasure”, as the Club Motto printed on our letterheads and regalia.

The Club has always tried to keep costs down by doing all work in-house. The Club has NO paid members and works on a voluntary basis. For the Club to survive it requires ALL Club members to do their bit.

The changes within (and outside) the Club have accelerated over the past few years, something which is hard for some of us older members to come to grips with. As us ‘Old Ones’ try to take a more back seat in the running of the Club, we do need the younger members to take a more active role.

Unfortunately, this is not happening (*or is it, we now have two young pilots on the Management Committee plus 3 young winch instructors ... Ed*) so some of the Older members are now feeling “Burn Out”.

At the end of a Flying day, there are jobs which could be done by any member. All aircraft washed underneath the fuselage before being put back in the hangar. Making sure all the Radios are on charge, parachutes all packed away. All keys must be back in their rightful place in the key cabinet, this includes the Clubhouse key which is invariably left in the Locked Caravan. Caravan Mains lead must be plugged in, all aircraft canopy covers on and all tail dollies/wheel removed from aircraft. All completed paperwork must be taken from the Caravan and put into the Club Office. Once that is done, the Bursar for the day (yes we do require some more members on Sunday for this duty) can sort out the paid flying fees.

The above has not actually changed over the last 25 years, relying on a few conscientious members to carry out the above.

My only plea to All members is to follow the Club Motto "through Work comes Pleasure"

11. Obituaries

PETER SPERRY by Brian Palmer

Peter was born in Leicester on March 13th 1947. After studying at Nottingham University he was employed by Tube Investments an Engineer and it was there that he met Linda, who eventually became his wife when they married in Peterborough in 1976. They have 2 children, Wendy & John.

The family went to Zambia where Peter was employed by a copper mining company as their Instrumentation Engineer. After 3 years there they returned to the U.K. when Peter joined BP Oil and at the same time he enrolled with the Open University and gained an Honours Degree in Mathematics.

The next career progression was to the position of Chief Engineer with Thames Water, meaning a move initially to Oxfordshire then to Terrington St. Clement near Kings Lynn.

Peter's interest in aviation started as with a lot of us by the building and flying of model aircraft. This led to a desire to try real flying and he joined the Fenland Gliding Club at RAF Marham.

It was there that he put his brilliant engineering skills to good use. He was eventually appointed Aircraft Manager in charge of all maintenance & repairs. He also undertook the design & construction of a glider trailer for the club's K13 which is still in use today.

After joining us at NVGC he soon became a 'team player', becoming involved in all the club's activities. He always thoroughly enjoyed his flying, especially the trips to Sutton Bank with Roger, Dave & Chris.

His engineering skills were to the fore when the Nuffield Tractor needed a new clutch. This is a tricky job, but with Peter on-hand it was always going to be done correctly. He also helped to repair the grass cutter after it was broken by 'yours truly' after it hit a large boulder. This was a big job completed in good time to enable the grass to be cut before it became too long for flying to continue. He also designed and fabricated the new tow-out draw-bar for the Grob 2-seaters.

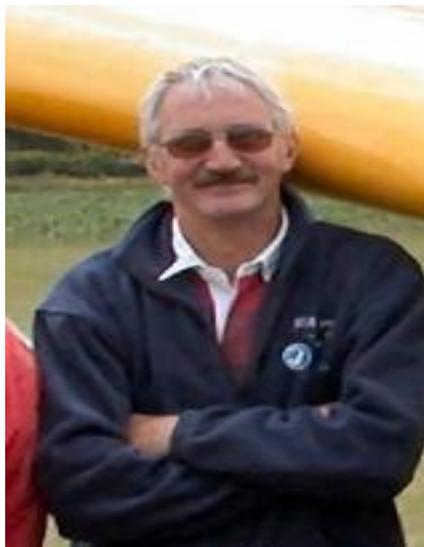
However, he will be best remembered for the design & construction of the windsock. One of his last requests before he passed away and with a wry smile was "Tell Phil not to bend it again and please paint it white on your next visit to the club".

Peter, we will always remember you and we are wiser and richer for having known you.

Brian Palmer

By the way, Peter has left his lathe and other tools to the club.

CHRIS ARMSTRONG by John Bennet with help from Roger Emms



Chris Armstrong 1946-2016. Some fond memories of a real Gentleman who was passionate about flying and helping others to improve theirs.

Members of Nene Valley Gliding Club will already be aware that Chris lost his life in a mid-air collision at Husbands Bosworth on Sunday December 4th 2016.

We first knew Chris at Upwood about 12 years ago. He had, I think, just retired from his day job, something to do with the Ministry of Defence or their recreational branch, the Royal Air Force. Beyond the working day he found time to qualify for an Off Shore Yacht Masters' ticket and skippered the RAF Sailing Association Nicholson ocean going yachts.

He was already known to the 'Henlow Mafia' at Upwood from his original glider flying training as a cadet with 616 VGS Gliding School, where he became a Staff Cadet. He left his mark at Henlow and also made an impression; apparently he drove a Land Rover into the Commanding Officer's car!

My first recollections of Chris at Upwood were of this quiet individual who came into the aircraft workshop where we were stripping many layers of paint from a K7 wing. Chris actually asked if he could help, always a way to the heart of a lazy aeroplane fettler, and help he did for many tedious days of dirty work. When we let him out of the workshop he re-soloed with the help of the Instructor team and quickly adopted the Club Junior for many partial 50k cross country flights.

When the RAFGSA Four Counties Gliding Club at Wittering were recruiting new members, Chris joined them and quickly became Deputy Chairman, using his professional skills to interface with the Royal Air Force on the Station. He became an instructor, operated an LS7 with two other syndicate members, gained an aerobatic rating at Saltby and spent many hours ensuring that Four Counties operated efficiently and beneficially for its members at Wittering. One day Chris landed out but was unable to make contact with anyone at the launch point to request a retrieve. The launch point was close to the Fire Station that Chris knew was always manned. He asked please could someone walk over to the launch point with a message. He was greeted with "we are far too busy to carry messages and who the hell did the caller think he was!!" Chris explained he was Chris Armstrong a member of the Gliding Club and if it would help he should be addressed as Group Captain Armstrong and he would appreciate that his message should be delivered soonest and so it was. The story goes that until that moment nobody at the Club was aware of Chris's exalted rank.

When the RAF decided to re-locate their fan driven Grobs to Wittering and as in their Lordships wisdom the airfield and its allocated airspace was limited in size, Four Counties had to go. Nobody would have them so unfortunately they were disbanded.

With the demise of Four Counties, Chris and others migrated to Husbands Bosworth and Chris trained to become a Full Cat. Instructor. He still found time to assist NVGC on Friday Evenings and other occasions. He was currently well on his way to becoming a power pilot, flying what he always called the "Motor Float" aka the Motor Falke. He had ambitions to own and fly an electrical powered glider that could take-off under its own power.

We at Upwood are particularly indebted to him for arranging the purchase from the RAFGSA of our two drum winch and the relocation of several pieces of useful ground equipment. The Portakabin destined to be Alan's new aircraft workshop was something else that Chris managed to procure for NVGC. Brian Palmer has always referred to the workshop as "The Armstrong Suite ", an appropriate label we should ensure prevails.

Chris leaves behind his wife Judith, daughter Sarah and son Mark, whom we can only thank for allowing us to share Chris, and offer our heartfelt sympathies for their loss. Chris has left a hole in the lives of many flying friends.

He was a gentleman, a pilot and a nice guy.

The following does seem kind-of appropriate:

Flying West

*I hope there's a place, way up in the sky,
Where pilots can go when they have to die.
A place where a guy could buy a cold beer
For a friend and a comrade whose memory is dear.
A place where no doctor or lawyer could tread,
Nor a management-type would e'er be caught dead!
Just a quaint little place, kind of dark, full of smoke,
Where they like to sing loud, and love a good joke.
The kind of a place that a lady could go
And feel safe and secure by the men she would know.*

*There must be a place where old pilots go,
When their wings become heavy, when their airspeed gets low,
Where the whiskey is old, and the women are young,
And songs about flying and dying are sung.
Where you'd see all the fellows who'd flown west before,
And they'd call out your name, as you came through the door,
Who would buy you a drink, if your thirst should be bad,
And relate to the others, He was quite a good lad!*

*And there, through the mist, you'd spot an old guy
You had not seen in years, though he'd taught you to fly.
He'd nod his old head, and grin ear to ear
And say, "Welcome, my Son, I'm proud that you're here!"
For this is the place where true flyers come
When the battles are over, and the wars have been won.
They've come here at last, to be safe and alone,
From the government clerk, and the management clone;
Politicians and lawyers, the Feds, and the noise,
Where all hours are happy, and these good ol' boys
Can relax with a cool one, and a well-deserved rest!
This is Heaven, my Son. You've passed your last test!*

— Captain Michael J. Larkin, TWA (Ret.), *Air Line Pilot Magazine*, Feb 1995

12. High Flight

At Chris Armstrong's funeral, which was well attended by NVGC's members as well as gliding people from many other clubs, there was a very moving reading of the Poem '**High Flight**' by **John Gillespie Magee**, an RAF pilot who was killed in an air-to-air collision in a Spitfire in 1941 aged just 20. It is beautiful and for those who have never read it I thought you might like the opportunity to do so:

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth,
And danced on high on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, -- and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of; wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence, Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark or even eagle flew --
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high un-trespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God

John Gillespie Magee Jr.

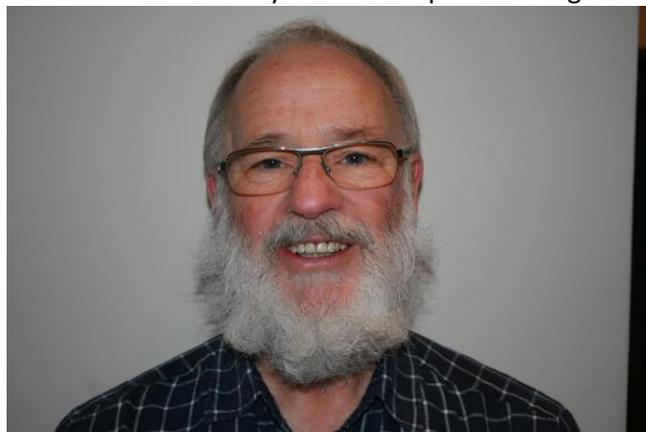
13. Social Matters

In order to help Ron & Di with the running of the social side of our club, it has been agreed that a new enlarged Social Sub-Committee will be set-up under the control of Ron and reporting to the Management Committee. The idea is to reduce Ron & Di's workload, whilst increasing the social side of the club. This is important as we must not diverge into, effectively, 3 clubs – the Thursday, Saturday and Sunday clubs. The only way to better integrate us all is to hold more regular social events and to do this more help is needed.

If anyone would like to volunteer to join Ron's team they should contact him directly.

14. And Finally

As many have noticed, Tony Walker has been growing his beard. It is not so that he can play Father Christmas at the local Women's Institute Party and Rave-Up. It is for a good cause.



Tony is having a Sponsored Shave and Haircut on 15th January to raise funds for St Ives Methodist Church as they need about £350,000 to carry out modifications and refurbishments so the premises will continue for another 200 years".

If you want to sponsor him then email Tony or catch him at the club.

I was delighted when the kind people at the Inland Revenue sent me a letter saying that my tax return was 'outstanding', particularly as I can't even remember sending it in!

Life is like a box of chocolates, it doesn't last long if you're fat.

Coffee can make some people really aggressive.
Last night I had 10 pints down the pub whilst my wife stayed at home and had two coffees.
You should have heard her shouting when I got home!

Well it's that time of the year when the big fatty with the beard comes round to the house to drink my whisky and give presents to the kids.

God I hate it when the mother-in-law visits.

I'm told by a very reliable source in Westminster that Boris Johnson's appointment was a mistake. Apparently Theresa May was given a list of possible ministerial appointments and wrote "F. Off" next to Boris' name.
Sadly her press secretary thought she meant Foreign Office and issued a press release before the error was spotted.

The meaning of words:

Secular - How the Queen describes the shape of her wheels
Onesy - Selfie taken by the Queen
Kinship - someone who is angry describing their boat
Ethos - Yorkshire musketeer
Fairy - what cats feel like in Liverpool
Shingles - a game of tennis with Sean Connery
Urdu - a hairstyle in Liverpool
Countryside - killing Piers Morgan
Testiculate - to wave one's arms around whilst talking *****
Ovaltine - a fat adolescent
Transport - cross dressing athletic event
Warehouse - someone who turns into a building at full moon
X-Ray - a former fish

HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS EVERYONE

