

NEWSLETTER OF THE NENE VALLEY GLIDING CLUB

Series 4 Vol.1 Issue 3 Editor: Peter Valentine – petervalentine100@gmail.com



Soaring Times



April 2023

Contents:

1. Editorial
2. Chairman's Chat
3. 10 Years of Scholarship Students at NVGC by Beth Aston
4. Romo – 67 Years in Gliding
5. 32 Years at Nene valley by Dave Mansfield
6. Ready, Walk....RUN by John Bennett
7. Scholarship News
8. Annual General Meeting
9. Prizegiving and Social Evening
10. New Winch
11. Junior Winter Gliding Series by Tim Williamson
12. New Members
13. This and That
14. And Finally...

1. Editorial

Since the last Newsletter we have enjoyed a splendid Summer of flying and soaring. Now Spring is again here we are all looking forward to this year's soaring season which we are starting with a full fleet of 6 aircraft, two twin-drum winches and sufficient ground equipment. Thanks are due to all who have contributed their time and efforts to make this so.

As all will know, just before New Year our friend and long-term fellow member Brian 'Farmer' Palmer suffered a stroke whilst at the club. Fortunately, the two Tims got an ambulance quickly and he was taken to hospital in Peterborough where he suffered a more serious one the same night. Since then he has made great progress, despite him thinking his progress is slow, and he has visited the club a few times. We all wish him a continuing good recovery.

The Twin-Astir trailer is in need of work to its floor and door. Once the materials are with us a small working party will be needed and the job should take around one day to complete. The rear door also needs to be replaced, but this will happen after the floor repair is complete.

In the past there was always a lot of enthusiasm for our Friday Evening Group Flying. Last year, however, we only had two and so far this year we have just one booked. These evenings show the club to a wider range of people, encourage people to get into gliding and are financially good for the club. Without more this year we face the possibility of having to increase our fees next year.

It was good for the club to be able to send a two-seater together with an instructor together with another experienced pilot to the Junior Winter Series at Denbigh. The club is thus seen in a good light and to be making its contribution to helping young pilots improve their skills. See the article by Tim Williamson below.

To keep the club running it is necessary to carry out work to maintain and improve our facilities and equipment. Typical of this work is the repair to the hard surfaces, cutting the grass, repairing equipment and painting 'things'. Please help with these activities in any way you are able.

Over the past few months, we have had a few safety-related issues. I won't reiterate them here, as we all know what has happened, but we absolutely must pay attention to detail when on the ground, driving vehicles, handling gliders, driving the winches and supervising other in different ground tasks. Our Safety Officer, Graham, has addressed these potentially unsafe practices and fortunately no serious damage or injury resulted from them. Please, let's keep ourselves, fellow members and guests safe.

2. Chairman's Chat

It was great to restart our awards night again after Covid. The winners are as follows:

Chairmans Shield went to Brian Palmer for his hard work on our airfield.

Cross-Country award to Lewis Smith, well done Lewis.

The Toilet Seat to Ron Sibley for his encounter with the gate.

The Marshall Papworth bowl went to Tim Williamson, our newest instructor.

Best in Wood and Vintage Cross-Country, both went to Jasmine Day. An excellent start of things to come.

Lastly our CFI, Steve, was awarded the Height Gain.

I think we are all looking forward to an excellent year's flying, as we now have all our fleet servable.

3. 10 Years of Scholarship Students at NVGC by Beth Aston

In 2013, members of NVGC marched into the Abbey College Library with an innovative new fully funded program to teach young people to fly, it was going to be the first of its kind in the UK. They came armed with a video of a glider soaring through the sky at speed, performing steep turns, a go-pro strapped to its wing and the pilot grinning as he shot past the camera. The promise that one day I too could look that cool was all it took for a little seventeen year old me to want to give it a go. It was going to be all my Top Gun dreams come true...

I've since learnt that it's less 'need for speed' and more 'need my heated jacket and a jaffa cake please' but still entertaining, nevertheless.

I remember being told on my first day on the airfield "not to worry, it's much like being on a rollercoaster". Except I hate rollercoasters. I wasn't off to a great start. Strapped into the front seat and shaking like a leaf, my hands in a vice-like grip around the straps of my chute and my eyes firmly screwed shut on the launch, I thought 'perhaps I ought to have taken up tennis instead'. As the cable released and the noise quietened, I suddenly understood the appeal of gliding. It was never going to be about speed and style (at least not in my case), I loved the calmness of it all, the world ceased to exist for as long as I was up there. It was peaceful despite the instructor's ramblings. I was hooked. My first solo followed 9 months later much to my mother's horror. (I'd learnt to keep my eyes open on the launch by then!).

10 years on and with a new intake of students underway, it feels like a good time to celebrate what we, as a club, have achieved. Over the years we have welcomed over 60 students to the club who have flown nearly 2000 flights between them up to solo, the average age of our members has reduced considerably, and the club's future feels more vibrant than ever. With many students going on to pursue careers and apprenticeships in engineering and the aviation industry it's a testament to the time and hard work its contributors have dedicated to the Scholarship Scheme's success.

In 2023 the draw to gliding still remains the same. Hopeful young pilots are still begging their parents to let them be a part of it. I'm aware that there have been naysayers along the way, on many occasions the 'youngsters' have far outnumbered the existing members. But we must ask the question 'where would the club have been after ten years without the boost in membership that the scholarship students have provided'? There have been times when it has only been possible to fly because students have been there to make up the numbers. We've taken part in and hosted junior interclub flying competitions, we've had mentions in S&G, our members have been recognised by the BGA for their contributions to the rejuvenation of gliding. We're still leading the way when it comes to encouraging a younger demographic to the sport. It's something that we should be incredibly proud of. On a personal note, I really wouldn't be where I am today had it not been for Nene Valley Gliding Club. I'll never be Maverick, but the scholarship program has been a talking point at every job interview I've had. I knew how to drive Land Rovers before I even took driving lessons, I learnt to drive tractors and tow trailers. My confidence has soared over the last ten years (pardon the pun) And above all, I might never have met Ian, so the club has a lot to answer for on that one...

(I believe the LH one was used as the 'promo' shot. My excitement is palpable...)



4. Roger Morrisroe (Rome), 67 Years in Gliding

Roger, our former CFI, decided to retire from Gliding at the end of last year. Many will already have read the tribute to him in S & G, but for those who have not it is reproduced here:

Roger started gliding whilst a Cadet with 248 (Letchworth) Squadron at Easter 1955 when he started at 106 Air Cadet Gliding School, RAF Henlow. He flew his first solo in August that year when aged 16. Shortly after that 106 GS was closed down due to Government cost saving.

In July 1958 a new Air Cadet gliding school began operations at RAF Henlow; 616 GS under the command of Peter Bullivant. Roger was invited to have a flight or two and then became one of the 'chosen few' when he was asked to join as a Staff Cadet. In terms of learning about gliding, being a Staff Cadet was like being given a 'magic key' to the air. In addition to learning to drive the winches, retrieve gliders and cables and take responsibility for the cadets under training on the field, developing flying skills to become an instructor was carried out and Roger progressed well over the next two years.

In May 1960, however, he was called-up for his National Service in the RAF, this being delayed due to his already being in the RAuxAF as an engine mechanic working on Gloster Meteors with 601 County of London Squadron at RAF North Weald.

With National Service over, he returned to 616 in 1962 and qualified as an RAF 'C' Cat instructor in 1965. By 1979 he was an A2* Instructor and CFI, following a motor-glider course.

Together with two other 616 instructors, an ex-RAF Prefect was purchased and this was flown at Cranfield until 1984 when a chance meeting led to an introduction to Nene Valley G.C. at Upwood where, following a check flight in a T21b there, the Prefect was flown. In 1987 he became an instructor at NVGC. He finally left 616 GS in 1990 with the RAF rank of Flight Lieutenant.

With the desire to move onto better aeroplanes, a share in a K6E was bought and it was in this that Roger completed his Silver 'C' with a 50 km to Andrewsfield in 1987, and 5 hour duration in 1988, the height gain having already been done at Henlow. Unfortunately, the K6E was destroyed when a serious storm overturned the trailer in which it was being stored, but after the insurer paid out, he bought into a Cirrus syndicate - glass-fibre at last! In the Cirrus he completed his 300 km in 1994 by which time he was an Ass. Cat Instructor, this being acquired in 1988.

In the early 1990's a problem with sudden departure of the then-CFI at Nene Valley saw Roger appointed to that role on a temporary basis with a dispensation from the BGA to do this for 6 months whilst still an Ass. Cat. After that spell, he gained his Full Cat and became CFI again in 2004, remaining in that position until he resigned from it in 2010 when Steve Jarvis took over.

With his background in heavy vehicle engineering he was instrumental in building two single-drum winches and worked a lot on the club's ground equipment. In 2009 he was awarded a BGA Diploma and a RAeS Certificate of Merit for services to gliding. One thing of which Roger is very proud was that he sent both his daughter Jo and granddaughter Daisy solo on their 16th birthdays.

He announced his retirement from gliding during November and said that he intended his last flights to be just before the end of this year. In fact, he flew 3 flights with two of his old 616 GS fellow instructors on 15th December in the club's Twin-Astir.

At the special lunch in the club-house after the final flight he was told that the club was awarding him an Honorary Lifetime Flying Membership so that he can come back and fly any time he wishes. That surprised him more than a bit and he was almost speechless!

In a flying career of 57 years with over 14,000 launches and a huge number of student pilots trained to his high standards, we at NVGC are proud to have had Roger as a friend, fellow pilot and instructor for so long.

Editor's Note: As a former 616 GS fellow instructor, I was delighted to have flown his last flight with him, although I do suspect and hope that he will return to fly with us again soon.



Romo with 3 of his fellow 616 Instructors at Upwood in August 2009, from the left, the Editor, the late and much missed Dave Braham, Pete Kirk and Romo.

5. 32 years at NVGC by Dave Mansfield

After the pandemic and a move to Swaffham, I have found the time that is spent at Nene Valley has reduced to a trickle. My flying expertise has been affected. Recognising this meant a decision had to be made. Being someone who is always looking at standards of others, continuing as a Basic Instructor is not tenable. I have been flying with other Instructors to try and improve my flying skills. I will remain as full flying member for the next year, helping with the Admin, Auditing and advising members of their medical renewals as well as flying.

I have enjoyed the 32 years of the gaining and departing of knowledge, some very memorable flights and some flights that I wish not to remember. Going cross country with the highlights from the trips. Landing at other airfields, visiting other Gliding sites expanded on my experience. The best flight was the 300km Goal flight I did, way back in the DG300 on 9th August 2007. This was the week when 5 other NVGC members did their 300km Goal flights during Task Week.



Sutton Bank expeditions were an annual event for me and one or two others each October.

Being a Basic Instructor for the last 17 years has been a pleasurable time, taking people up for the first time, then teaching them the basics of flight, seeing them after with that big smile on their faces, always having a sick bag at the ready (only 5 recollections of this) but more important was to see their confidence grow.

Stepping back from being a fully active member, has been difficult. I will still be about for advice but realise nobody is indispensable, hopefully our younger members can be persuaded to take on some of the work.

Editor's Note: David, your commitment and enthusiasm for NVGC has been apparent to all of us. Thank you for all that you have done and, I'm sure, will continue to do.

6. Ready, Walk....RUN by John Bennett

This is an article from many years ago and features some main characters who may not be familiar to newer members. Thanks to John for saying it 'as it used to be'.

I have a new love in my life, well actually I share her with several other blokes and I guess she has been around a bit.

Then I suppose so have we all. In her time, she has tutored many aspiring pilots, satisfied some and inspired others to even greater heights. She is a Slingsby T8 Tutor, tail identification BBG, built in 1948 introduced to Upwood by Andy and Pete. She only weighs 358 lbs. and became the first choice one-day during Task Week when the cloud-base precluded normal flying operations.



Kirby T8 (not the one in the article)

OK we need to go back a little further to explain. It all started when we met this chap in a bar at Camphill. An auction, to get rid of surplus kit, was to be organised and on offer was a Bungee Rope.

Talk about the correct spelling of Bungee amongst your selves if you like. S and G spell it Bungy and debate its origins, even considering it to be from one of the Indian languages. Martin Simon in his book on Slingsby Sailplanes spells it Bungee and that's good enough for me. It only will take a second to describe a Bungee to you who have not seen one and I will do it in a minute.

As with all potential deals done in bars, the Bungee was not available for inspection and its custodian claimed it was in the original manufactures wrapping but he would not vouch for its condition. Now the beer at Camphill is excellent and as it was Andy's round, I had drank very little but suddenly became overcome with the need to be the new custodian of this flexible friend. I thought perhaps offering £50 would prevent it going to auction and one day allow us to understand some of the mysteries of launching the T38 Grasshopper in the traditional method. I checked out the idea with JY who would you believe was also in the bar, as Tom had been buying beer because as usual he had come second again. So the deal was blessed from ahigh. The procurement of the Grasshopper is another tail I will bore you with soon after it flies. We settled on £5, cash in hand and I was given instructions on how to find RAF Cranwell where it could be picked up the following weekend.

Now as you will all know, aerotows, winch launching with either flexible cable or with single strand piano wire, or autotows with the same medium either in a straight line or around a pulley or shoulder launching are only some of the silly ideas so far tried by mankind to get aloft and emulate the birds. Come to think of it birds don't use any of those methods. Anyway, Bungee launches were popular at hill sites, well with pilots if not so much with the serfs who had to do the pulling. Pre-Service units like the CCF and the ATC., all who were excused football and other pointless ball games if they played aeroplanes, used Bungee launching of Primary gliders like the Grasshopper to be introduced to the delights of flying. It was also popular at Public Schools but probably because of the masochistic element of the activity. I suspect I wouldn't upset to many of the Members of the NVGC by such a comment although I believe we have several who went to schools that were approved. What do you mean get on with it, background is important?

During T-Week, our new tool was duly unwrapped and had all the appearance of being in perfect condition. JY took charge, had the tail hitched to the caravan that was deemed immovable and had two teams of four volunteers to provide horse-power. Well donkey-power actually. Up until then we had been dozing in the shade of the caravan either to dodge driving the winch or to avoid buying any more launches in case it depleted our beer money for the upcoming Bar-B-Q.

The purpose of the exercise was primarily to check for any sudden twang when the elastic was stretched and to demonstrate the drill to be exercised by the launching party. This was initiated by the signaller who with supreme confidence of the immovable caravan was briefed to stand in front of it and to command the two teams at each leg of the Y to WALK and to indicate when the stretchometer showed half by screaming STOP. Unfortunately, Brian Crackers had taken the day off, otherwise his more usual request to WOW might have been more appropriate. A second attempt took the stretch to its maximum permissible limit where the RUN command would normally be given. The comedian in charge then gave the pullers the opportunity to pull by instructing first one and then another to release the tension. He just managed to overcome his natural enthusiasm for the sequence before Grommit was launched into space. The exercise was concluded with a dance routine that resulted in the Bungee being stowed for future use.

Now this is where the story really starts. August the 9th, cloud base 200 feet, visibility not much better, wind light and variable and determined always to provide a downwind launch. JY in BBG, stalwarts including a brace of Chrisses, Gennaro, Roger, Alan and Margaret, Steve, Clive, Paul, Taff, Squeaky, Tom and Physco as potential launch power. Wing tips and tail anchor men in place. Ready, Walk and Run and the Tutor trundles forward a little way without any magic air beneath the wheel. A second attempt with increased DP, results in a climb to 76.5 feet QNH. (18 inches QFE). JY should be well on his way to the Upwood ridge to gain enough height to make contact with the thermals that will be popping off as the mist clears. Then to the Upwood wave for his first 500Km. Would you believe it the ridge wasn't working, the wind had swung round again.

Tom, who until only recently, usually follows behind John, was next. Congratulation on the 300k in the Ka8 Tom. Now Tom is 6 foot 36 inches tall and demonstrated his second set of knees allowing

his legs to fold twice, to get in the Tutor. Unfortunately he failed to leave the ground due to a flat tyre.

If you would like to have a go, we have the kit and some experience of using it. JY has offered to oversee the exercise on a suitable day in the future. Naturally achievements will need to be celebrated in the time-honoured manner. Ah! Did I mention that I had a go after JY? The launch was as smooth as a silk worm's fart and I can now record the magic bungee launch in my logbook for the first time. A couple of weeks later she took me to 4,500 feet after a winch launch. No wonder we Old Gits fall for these young birds.

7. Scholarship News

On Sunday 26th March the assessments of this year's applicants for the 3 available places on our unique Gliding Scholarship Scheme took place. Seven hopefuls from Abbey College duly turned up and after a thorough briefing were given two flights each, one flight being with Roger Emms and the other with Julian Bane. They were also assessed for their attitude and willingness to join in on the ground and at the end of the day the lucky three were given the good news.

They are Jacob Keele, Pirayugen Pirabhakaran (Pira) and Arran Lindsay.

Julian was able to run a 3-day introductory course for two of the three, Jacob being away during that time, and great progress was made. All three will normally attend on Saturdays for training, but are, of course, welcome on any day.

We welcome our new members and look forward to helping them to develop both their flying skills and their life skills with our club.



Front row from the left, Jacob, Pira and Arran

8. Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual general Meeting was a very short affair due to the reports required being pre-circulated. The Committee remains unchanged from last year, but Tim Ward has been co-opted as temporary Site Manager in view of Brian's continued unavailability.

The Chairman and the CFI outlined their plans for the year and there were no questions from any members.

9. Prizegiving and Social Evening

The decision not to have a formal dinner, but to have a buffet in the club-house instead was very well received. The food was excellent, there was sufficient for everyone, and the more informal atmosphere and dress-code was welcome.

Award winners are listed in 'Chairman's Chat' (above), but here are photos of Jasmine & Lewis:



10. The New Winch by *Peter Valentine*

When the old single-drum winch had finally reached the end of its useful life, the decision was made to try to find a suitable replacement. It would have been very unwise to have simply relied on one winch as any breakdowns would have rendered the club grounded.

A winch appeared on 'gliderpilot.net' for sale at Nympsfield (Bristol & Gloucester G.C) and it looked very promising so Michael, Steve and I took a trip to have a good look at it. It looked excellent, although due to the weather we could not experience any launches with it. A deal was done by our esteemed Chairman, subject to experiencing it in action and a couple of weeks later Steve, Brian Palmer, Ron Sibley and Michael returned and experienced it in action.

It was collected on a big low-loader and arrived at Upwood together with a reel of new cable, some drogue 'chutes and other spares.

For the technical it is a SupaCat Twin-Drum. Power is from a Deutz 12.7 litre V8 air-cooled diesel. It certainly has great torque, although it has proved difficult to drive as well as we like. However, it seems as though there is an issue with the speed control and above about 1000 rpm the engine revs increase in an un-commanded way. This is to be investigated and should be identified very shortly.



Our 'new' SupaCat

11. U.K. Junior Gliding Winter Series at Denbigh by Tim Williamson

Now that I'm back from the latest winter series event with the Juniors, I thought I'd better write something for the Newsletter. I want to say thanks to the club for lending me the Twin Astir for the weekend, even though it meant only 1 two seater for the weekend.

Things started badly when Sean, Ross, Zoe, Peter and myself set about getting the Twin into its box. We had got one wing off and were rolling it into the trailer when there was an almighty crash as the door gave way. We soon discovered why the door broke. Not only had we not lowered the jacks at the back (we didn't know they were there, honest), we also realised that the wood the hinges bolted

to was completely rotten and could barely support the weight of the door, let alone the lump of concrete that is an Astir wing. Luckily though, we had the always helpful Ross from Crowland with his seemingly never ending toolkit there to help sort the door out and we were back in business. We hadn't been on the road long when some issues started to present themselves. Sean was leading with our Grob, Ross with the Twin 2 and myself bringing up the rear. Over the course of the next 4 hours, I was in almost constant hysterics (sorry Sean) watching Sean trying to get our trailer to tow in a straight line. Just when he got it to behave, someone would overtake, and he would then need a fresh pair of pants again.

Friday morning broke and we were treated to a beautiful sunrise, highlighting some wave in the distance and with a good day forecast, we got a crew together and rigged the Astir. After morning briefing I grabbed Sean for a check flight and we launched around 10:50. After a 2500ft aerotow we connected with a wave bar and climbed to around 5,500ft and got some fantastic photos. After about an hour we got called to come back down so I could fly some more of the Juniors. The rest of the day progressed well and the wave slowly disappeared so flights got slowly shorter and some of the instructors decided to treat us to some Aerobatics and low passes before putting everything away. A few of us went out for dinner that night where I discovered that a Subaru WRX, while not exactly a big car, won't quite fit in a standard Welsh parking space (I was starving so it got left where it was with its backside hanging out).

Saturday was quiet for us due to it not being soarable and the other 2 seaters doing aerobatic training, so instead the car got washed (thanks Zoe) and I arranged for the Cirrus to get its wings refinished at the end of next season. I also met a fellow Subaru enthusiast who had managed to get sponsorship for his university people for the event and had also been given 150 cans of Monster Energy drink, so everyone that knows me can believe he became my best friend straight away (Ha Ha), the only condition being we had to have our photo taken in a glider with a can of Monster. That night there was a band playing Irish folk music and a considerable amount of drinking was done. (There was Irish Dancing and I'm praying the video of me has been lost somewhere)

Sunday began somewhere around 09:00 with a trip to the local cafe for a full English, much needed after the previous night. After helping my new best mate with a few bits on his car, Sean brought the Astir down and a few flights followed, in weak thermalling, conditions to around 2,500ft, including a flight with Matt the Scooby man, during which he managed his first almost full aerotow and some decent thermalling techniques for someone who hasn't experienced an original Twin Astir before. Eventually the time arrived to put the glider back in its box which thankfully was uneventful, the multiple borrowed "3 piece suite's" wedging the glider much better than last time and having said our goodbyes to everyone, we got on our way home. Sean seemed to have tamed the twin trailer, so I checked all was well and at his request put the hammer down and made for home, arriving at around 21:30 and Sean around 22:20. Although there wasn't as much flying as I had hoped for it was a fantastic experience and now the junior gliding community knows not just who we are, but where we are.

I want to say a massive thank you to the Committee for letting us borrow the Twin, to Sean for his patience and towing the glider, to Ross and Zoe for fixing whatever broke and to Denbigh Gliding for hosting the Juniors.

12. New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who have recently joined:

Louise Pollard, Richard Short, Sharon 'Cher' Wass, Jacob Keeler, Pirayugen Pirabhakaran (Pira) and Arran Lindsay.

13. This and That

It is understood that our Treasurer, Roger, has acquired a very rare Slingsby Dart. We look forward to seeing it as soon as you can get the paperwork done.

Possibly of interest is what some members get up to as sports and pastimes as well as gliding:

Martin Reynolds has an exhibition-standard 00-gauge model railway.

Louise Pollard is a qualified SCUBA diver.

Rob Richards has two Peugeot 106 rally cars and is a serious competitor in National rallies.

Lewis Smith is also into motor-sport and recently did an 'Auto-Solo' event on the old Debden airfield.

Cher Wass plays the drums.

14. And Finally.....

Brian was able to visit us at the Club on Sunday 16th April and was able to get into a K13. Once launched he took control and after finding a relatively weak thermal managed to gain a couple of hundred feet.

Although he needed help getting in and out, he enjoyed the flight and it was a pleasure for all members present to see him flying again.



And:

