How far can you go?

Lake Keepit

Five hours in a Prefect

The Soaring Engine

Photo: Andy Holmes
Introduction

We were probably aware in early March that COVID-19 was around, but I don’t think that anyone anticipated the speed with which it would change everything in our lives and possibly how far into the future that it would still be having an impact.

The effect on our lives didn’t fully register with me until I came to work a few days after the lock-down had started, and suddenly seeing the airfield so completely quiet really hit me like a bucket of cold water.

The slow relaxation of Government restrictions has allowed the resumption of solo flying, but this is only a part of what Lasham is about. It’s going to be a long slow process to bring things back to something resembling normality.

EASA licensing

In April the new rules for Sailplane Flight Crew Licensing came into force and as you can imagine it wasn’t high on the list of things to tell members about. We were initially given one year to convert all pilots over to the new licensing system, but thanks to COVID this has been extended until October 2021.

If you want some bedtime reading then further bed time reading then the details about the AMC’s and GM’s can be viewed on the EASA website.


License and medical revalidations

The CAA were fully aware at the start of the pandemic, that with the suspension of flying and the restrictions on movement, many pilots would be unable to revalidate their license, or find a medical examiner. To help alleviate some of the issues they have issued a number of Official Record Series 4 Exemptions.

To save you trawling through the list of ORS4’s and trying to interpret the legal babble contained within them, the BGA have produced a handy one stop document. https://members.gliding.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/04/COVID19-CAA-pilot-licence-exemptions-BGA-guidance.pdf

If you are flying on an EASA license, it’s really important that you check the validity of the ratings and make sure you comply with the revised revalidation requirements. It’s also worth remembering that if you are just flying a sailplane (UK Registered) the current national requirements also still apply and you don’t require a license, just a valid driving license to prove medical fitness.
Two-seater training
Lasham is all things to all pilots and clearly since the restart of solo flying it feels like there is a void. It’s the realisation that the actual beating heart of Lasham is the training that takes place every day throughout the year.

We know that at some point in the very near future Government will relax the current restrictions on dual flying with members of different households, and we have been working to put measures in place to allow the swift resumption once the go ahead is given. As we don’t actually know at the moment what will be required in terms of sanitisation and PPE, we are having to make some assumptions. Here is our best guess on how we will operate.

Cockpit sanitisation
Changing pilots will be where the risk of cross-contamination occurs, so there will be a requirement for the pilot to sanitise the cockpit before they start their flying session and then again after they finish. Lasham will provide the anti-bacterial spray and paper towels.

Face mask and gloves
We are anticipating that the requirements for operating in an enclosed space at less than 1 metre spacing will require the wearing of face masks and possibly gloves. As we have already anticipated this possible requirement, they have already been purchased and will be readily available at the launch-point.

Operating protocol and risk assessment
Once I finish writing this article, the next job in my list will be writing the operating protocol and risk-assessments for the resumption of two-seater training, and as you can imagine its not the part of my job that really gets me excited and enthusiastic. Fortunately, as I have already written these documents for the solo-flying operation and winch launching, it should be a relatively straightforward and painless process of transferring what we already know about our operations into the new document.

Before the resumption of training, all pilots will be made aware of these documents and asked to read and understand how the operation will work. This information will be made available via a drop box link.

Competitions
Life is full of uncertainties and this year has provided them by the bucket load. The Society has decided not to hold the 18/20 Metre Nationals in August this year. All competitors have been sent an email with further details.

Expeditions.
For over 30 years Lasham has been running expeditions for its members and they have been to a number of locations around the UK and Europe. The planning for these trips usually starts in the autumn of the previous year, as we often have to commit to accommodation and ferry bookings well in advance.

COVID-19 came along in March and brought the Jaca expedition to a very sudden halt. With the restrictions that were in place and more importantly the uncertainty over what will happen in the next few months, we have made the decision to cancel the Aboyne expedition while there is still time to claim some of the deposit back.

I am hopeful that normal service will be resumed for next year and people are able to enjoy some early season flying in the Pyrenees.

Web-based training.
Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic we have all seen a change in the way we communicate with our friends, family and work colleagues. At the beginning of March, I had never heard of Zoom or Microsoft Teams, but nearly four months on I can now regard myself as almost proficient in their use.
We are now running regular webinar training lectures and daily flying briefings and despite my initial scepticism, it has worked well, with the feedback from members being completely positive. Its fairly obvious now that the classroom briefings are a thing of the past and the only face-to-face briefing that a student will get are probably the pre-flight brief at the launch-point before jumping into the glider.

We have clearly just scratched the surface of the briefings that we can cover online and this will be a project over the coming winter months to produce and deliver all of the lectures from pre-solo to instructors’ level via interactive webinars. Please watch this space for more info.

![Image](image.jpg)

**Colin Watt**

CFI Lasham Gliding Society

### Webinars

- **Big Jets at Lasham - Talk by 2Excel Engineering** 1hr 45
- **Flying Training after lockdown Q&A**
- **Human Performance Bronze Webinar**
- **Communications Webinar**
- **Paul Ruskin’s FRTOL pre-course on-line material**

David Masson’s SoarMet web-site now has links to a SSE-facing camera and a WSW-facing camera on the clubhouse’s roof. You can now look at the grid from your bed and see if you are missing out! [https://www.soarmet.com/](https://www.soarmet.com/)

The cover photo was taken by Andy Holmes while acting as sniffer on 25 May 2020. (About half of Lasham’s 243 gliders.)

We’re flying in the evenings again now getting our instructors and winch drivers up to speed for the rest of the summer ahead.

As always the latest information on Lasham will be on our web-site or social media as well as by email for our members.

**Parascending at Lasham (1962)**

*Pathe News item of parascending by the Army at Lasham* found by Jordan Bridge

**Gliding at Detling (1953)**

*Pathe News item of Derek Piggott flying at Detling* found by Graham Garnett

“Periscope” film on British gliding 1952

*Film including Philip Wills and Fred Slingsby*

We have been gearing up for the resumption of pre- and post-solo training and this will recommence on Monday 6 July. If you read the guidance that’s been issued by the DfT and also the BGA, you will realise that it’s not a case of just slotting back into the normal way we used to do things, but an adaption of our operating protocols to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the training process.

So key points to note are.

1) **Bookable training only.** We have to match the demand for training to the number of instructors we currently have available. Booking will be done through the Lasham office, as they will have access to the new system and can match students to the number of instructors who will be attending. There will be a tab on the Lasham website to see the booking list and any availability, but members will have to phone the Lasham Office to get their name added to the list. This system should be up and running by Saturday 4 July. As we are anticipating a large initial demand there will be a small restriction on the number of slots you can book. Once we have cleared the backlog of licensed pilots wanting check flights we will be able to open up more training slots.

The Evening Groups will also be running, so if you want to do some training or check flights on one of these, I suggest that you contact the evening group leaders directly to book in. The Lasham office will be able to pass on the Group Leaders’ contact details. Again space will be limited due to daylight hours and instructor availability.

2) **It’s not just turn up, fly and go home.** There will be few people hanging around the launch-point, so if you are booked in for a flying session please be prepared to stay and help out with the launching operation.

3) **Face Coverings.** Our operating protocol is based on the current guidance that has been issued by the DfT and the BGA. All pilots flying in a Lasham-owned two-seater gliders or powered aircraft will be required to wear a face mask and gloves when flying dual. We have already purchased a large supply of these items for the use by instructors and students and they will be available from either the Lasham office, or in the launch-point vehicle. Please remember that these items have a cost, so don’t just help yourselves to a handful, because if they start to disappear at a faster rate that we are launching gliders, we will be forced to charge for them.

4) **Duration of flights.** The BGA have issued guidance to CFIs about the resumption of training and one of the recommendations is that training flights are kept to the minimum duration required to complete the briefed training exercises. This means that extended soaring training and two-seater cross-country training are off the menu at the moment.

Our operating protocols and risk assessments for winch-launching and two-seater training can be viewed via the Dropbox link below.

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lyss93pr8f1088k/AACeHziqs9r9hX24x6GhRFQya?dl=0

BGA guidance on restarting flying can be found on
https://members.gliding.co.uk/covid19-restrictions-support-exemptions-and-restarting-gliding-information/


**Colin Watt**
Our last GHC update for the March edition of *Rising Air* was full of optimism. Spring was here with the promise of lots of flying and the workshop project was a “Go”. Then, of course, just after the release of *Rising Air* the full force of the Covid-19 epidemic hit and everyone was stuck on terra firma gazing up to day after day of beautiful skies. You couldn’t have written it could you, or, if you had, people would say you were stark staring mad! So zero flying for the GHC and all public tours of our hangars have stopped until further notice. However, there is good news and that is that the new workshop has been coming along in leaps and bounds.

The Trish Williams workshop project is being very ably and enthusiastically led by Gary Pullen and Richard Moyse. After a great deal of preparatory groundwork by a few of our members, Lowthers started the construction on the 29 April. They completed their work on 3 June, and so we had an insulated building shell (see below).

After completing the floor it’s the doors and then putting in the workshop partitions. Phew, still loads to do but no-one can say that we aren’t making major progress!

**Flying**
Not very much! The Bergfalke had a few flights in January and then a long, long gap before the YS53, “the Beast”, flew on the 7th June. We have two gliders that are insured, suitably equipped (FLARM, moving map, handheld radio) and available for flying. These are the YS53 (though only one up, P2s not allowed at the moment) and the Skylark 2. We had intended to have six gliders insured in 2020 but the Covid-19 epidemic has caused a rethink. If a demand for more flyable gliders becomes clear, we’ll likely get another one or two equipped and insured.

**New gliders**
Not too surprisingly none as non-essential journeys have until recently been banned. Still to be decided, but we may be getting a Torva Sprite, and a Schweizer TG3a two-seater was offered by the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, before the Covid-19 lock-down started.
What’s next?
Getting the workshop operational is the number one priority. After that we will look how Lasham and the GHC is placed in aftermath of this accursed Covid-19 epidemic.

The probable next major project is extending the second hangar by 24 metres and we already have the funding for that. However, we may decide to wait and sit on the funds for a while. The ultimate goal is to construct a museum building in the GHC meadow that will hold our archives, have a big display area, and also have a lecture theatre. This one is sitting out over the horizon and it will be nice when it comes into view for serious consideration!

Dates for the diary
It’s pretty much a blank at present, I’m afraid. All of the local fetes and near to us airfield events that we would normally support have been cancelled. In particular we have had to cancel the Lasham Vintage Task Week, 22–28 August.

There is no date for the opening of the Trish Williams Workshop. We hope this should happen in the late autumn, though for it go ahead we will need a significant relaxation in the current social distancing rules.

Glyn Bradney
The season so far

As in previous years, I have listed the top twenty flights from Lasham with the highest total score on the National Ladder for the year to date. All flights started and ended at a Lasham turn-point unless stated. Fourteen Lasham pilots are in the top twenty on the National Ladder. It is almost unnecessary to report that Adrian Emck is leading the Vintage Ladder.

I have to mourn the lost days earlier in the season which would have certainly produced flights for this table, but even so, 30 & 31 May produced flights that will live long in my memory. On both days cloud-base was over 7000 feet in places. However both days finished by late afternoon, so the distances are not as great as the conditions suggested. JMcC

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<th>Glider</th>
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After my last contribution to *Rising Air*, I was warned off any more articles about sailing (not by the editor!). This article is definitely about gliding, but I think I can re-use the title at least, and there are connections to sailing.

What I like to do in gliding, which is the same as I like to do in sailing, is to go as far away from base as I can and get back in a day. It adds to the enjoyment if the far point of the flight is at the edge of the island, i.e. beach or sea. A map shows there are still plenty of gaps to fill in, mostly in places where the sea is close in two directions!

To reach some of the more distant coastlines, a long day is needed with the gradient-wind generally offshore. (Even then, if there’s a sea breeze, there’s a long glide to the sea and back to the thermals.) What this means of course is that you spend the entire day downwind of Lasham, in some cases a long way downwind.

Sometimes I get there, sometimes I don’t; usually I get back; occasionally I run out of day and land relatively close on the way home; one day, I will land out a long way away!

This article describes two “as far as I can go” flights, and a third flight of a different kind on the day between.

**Saturday 30 May.** Good conditions were forecast, with ESE wind and high cloud-bases, especially in North Wales. A good day for Snowdon, maybe even Anglesey. But hang on…what about the COVID lockdown? The Welsh Assembly had not relaxed the rules which prevented gliding from Welsh airfields, and while their airspace wasn’t actually closed, it was definitely “there be dragons” for anyone who even accidentally landed in that country. So, I chose the most distant BGA turning point in that general direction without going into Wales: Ellesmere in northern Shropshire.

At 460km, the out and return distance didn’t seem far enough (I normally plan on 80kph or 90kph multiplied by length of the whole soaring day) so I added a TP at Sherborne which made it 558k. When the launch didn’t start as early as expected, I swapped Sherborne for Tisbury to reduce the distance to about 515k. I evidently didn’t succeed in revising my declaration though; in flight I found the Oudie still wanted me to go to Sherborne. “Oh well…do I really think I can task set to a precision of +/- 10%? It’ll probably be OK.” I stuck with the 558km task.

Things went quite well. 1/8 Cu on the first leg, with average 3.2kt climbs which, together with some good runs of lift and the 10-15kph tail wind, allowed me to average comfortably over 100kph even...
though I didn’t get up to cloud-base till just before the first turn. The second leg, with higher climbs and, once North of the M4, a good selection of flat Cu, felt better but the average climb rate was the same, and without the tailwind I averaged just under 100kph. The third leg started well with the Cu lining up conveniently close to track, though it was hard to find the good climbs.

As I reached the Cotswolds again, there were still Cu, but fewer, and it looked blue to the South of Brize. I climbed as high as I could (7000ft near Stow on the Wold) and from then on took pretty much every climb I came across. This was partly a change to day-end tactics but also with the aim of routing over the top of Brize Norton zone. As a precaution, I got a clearance anyway, but passed overhead without difficulty so didn’t need to use it.

Still taking anything reasonably climbable, I got back up to 6000ft near Abingdon at 1815hrs. Not enough for a final glide because of 10-15kts ESE wind but enough for me to think it was probably going to work out. After 27km of dead blue air and 3000ft lower, near Pangbourne, I felt some life in the air and found a 2kt core. It felt solid and all it had to do was take me up to the base of the airspace at 4500. Sadly, it only did

I could glide on in fading hope of a top-up climb to avoid a landing near Basingstoke, or I could explore locally with the option to land at Brimpton Airfield. My local exploration was unsuccessful, so I landed at Brimpton, 23km from home. (What was that earlier thought about +/- 10%?).

I’m glad I took that option rather than a field because as soon as I rolled to a halt, the phone pinged and I learned that son Olly (mutual retrieve buddy!) was down at Rivar Hill Airfield. He’d been watching me on Flarm radar, both willing me on and Whatsapp-ing Lasham to arrange an aerotow retrieve for me. I was duly aerotowed back in short order (Thanks Colin), parked up the glider, and off I went for a sunny evening drive with Olly’s trailer along the Bourne valley.

Sunday 31 May. Having arrived home last night at nearly midnight, seeing now what I interpreted as a forecast of similar weather to yesterday, and wanting to avoid the late afternoon (non-) return in declining conditions, I took it easy in the morning – accepting that I would be taking a relatively late launch and envisaging a faster flight in the stronger core of the day. So I was two thirds of the way down what turned out to be another 100 glider Lasham grid.

Assuming a 1 o’clock start and 6 o’clock finish, a 500 might just be on (higher speed assumed today – if using only the best part of the day) but I felt that would be pushing my luck (again!). I settled on 400k triangle to FAI rules, for which the BGA ladder awards an 8% bonus. I wanted to return from the North West to minimise the impact of the expected blueing out from the SE, and therefore would start the task by going West. Given the constraints of Birmingham and Bristol airspace, the TPs pretty much defined themselves as Crewkerne and Stratford West.

There had been a good-looking but isolated street high overhead Lasham aligned ESE-WNW since just before the first grid launch. The street gradually migrated North so by the time I launched it was about
halfway to Basingstoke. David Masson thought it marked the boundary between two air-masses and that conditions to the South of it might not be so good. Not quite what I wanted to hear but I didn’t want to re-task, so I ignored it!

The grid launch progressed quickly, and I took off sooner than expected. Using three thermals and a bit of other scrabbling around, I climbed under that street from 2500ASL to the base of the TMA in 20 minutes, achieving the stunning average climb rate of 1.5kt. “Conditions must be better en-route, mustn’t they? Let’s just get going.”

Five thermals at average 5.1kts, three of them to cloud-base at 6500 together with the tail wind got me to Crewkerne at 135kph. Downwind first legs are usually misleading, but it was a jolly good position to start the second leg from. I began to think I should have had more ballast.

(For several years I habitually launched with 150kg of water (40kg shy of max AUW), but when you’re going early you end up staggering around overloaded for the first part of the flight. This doesn’t matter when you’re waiting around for stronger conditions before starting a task, but when you’re trying to use the whole day, it makes things more precarious initially. More recently I’ve gone back to launching with 100kg, which the ASW28 copes with easily and in typical British conditions it doesn’t feel too light. That’s what I had today because that was the capacity of the tubs I had to hand!)

I covered half the second leg in two cloud-hopping glides with a decent climb separating them. The first glide was at nearly 80:1 but the second at only just over half that. I was on the Bristol frequency and preparing to call them for clearance to take what looked like the obvious gliding route, but I didn’t quite get around to it. That part of the “obvious gliding route” barely worked at all so the airspace was not an issue and I arrived near Hullavington at 2600 ASL with no attractive options available.

Normally I wouldn’t be too concerned at 2600, but today that was 4000ft from cloud-base; not a good place to be. In the circumstances the 10 minutes I spent climbing at 2kt average did seem like an attractive option, but it was less than half the going rate. “The damage is done; put it behind you.” The rest of the north-bound leg was good, with four more thermals, one to cloud-base at over 7000.

During this part of the flight, I wondered if I should be flying faster. I normally cruise at 80kt, slowing down to 60ish for lift I’m not expecting to stop in. In weak conditions or if there’s a gap to cross, I’ll go at 70kt. Rarely, I’ll glide at 90kt. Even though I wasn’t really thinking about it, from SeeYou it’s clear that today I flew on average about 5kt faster than the day before or the day after. But I think this probably reflects that today’s flight didn’t include the declining part of the day rather than any big difference in my glide speed.

The home-bound leg was similar to the day before except that thermals were easier to find and the energy lines much better. I took significant climbs only near Edgehill and Oxford, and a 300ft top up in the blue at Abingdon which served only to add 300 to the height I had to burn off to get below the 5000ft LTMA south of Didcot! From
there is was good air all the way home, arriving at 1620hr for a task speed of 110kph – a personal best.

**Monday 1 June.** The next day I was near the front of the grid, hoping for an early start to go a long way West. NE wind is good for the West Country, and also the Cu were forecast to start earlier in that direction. I’d like to glide to Lands End one day. I’ve been as far as Bodmin before and saw conditions which would probably have got me to Truro. Also, during a sailing expedition last year, Chris Starkey and I observed a sea breeze front reaching from near Lands End as far as we could see in the direction of Falmouth. So maybe, just maybe it could all be connected up.

However, it’s a 700km out & return from Lasham and I’d need an earlier start than I was going to make today! I declared Bodmin (540k o/r), as the furthest I thought I could get back from, but with the thought (not shared with my mutual retrieve buddy!) that if it looked good beyond, I would carry on, accepting that I probably wouldn’t get all the way back.

The forecast was for Cu in the West, but it was scrappy blue when I left at about 1215hr. There were haze caps and tiny Cu to aim for but mostly the climbs were in other places. It went OK for 150k, flying some of the time with others from Lasham, but all of a sudden it went wrong and I was seriously field picking just North of Exeter airport. Got away with that, with assistance from Imperial College’s “96” which had fallen into the same hole.

After that the character of the flight changed - stronger (for a while) and higher thermals. Even so, the nearest proper Cu on track were still 40km away and I started to think about turning back. But I’m easily swayed so when I bumped into another decent thermal (still in the blue) which took me up to 5600, I carried on. The “nearest proper Cu” were in fact a convergence the other side of Dartmoor but it was weak and cores hard to find and centre. I bumbled along taking a couple of turns here, a couple there, and got to 6000ft from which I could glide out to Bodmin, arriving just after 1500hrs. The convergence extended a few km in the direction of Padstow, but everywhere else to the West was blue, so Lands End will have to wait.

I came back along the same convergence, and then diverted well North to another which I’d heard others giving conflicting reports about on the radio earlier. This one didn’t work very well for me either, but it seemed a better idea than the blue everywhere else.

(I normally fly with the radio switched off, mainly because I find it distracting, particularly when, as happens all too often, others are reporting stronger climbs than I’m finding! The perverse consequence is that I probably spend more time talking to various ATCs (which is a bind, but I feel I have to get used to) than to other glider pilots.)
It’s a feature of West Country flying that if the conditions are good enough to get from Lasham to Cornwall, they are also strong enough to draw the sea air in from both the North and the South, with the risk the return route will be cut off. It can be a bit tense until you’re back over the high ground to the North East of Honiton. Today, after 50km of dodging around along the convergence, which was pretty much on the centre-line of the peninsular, I arrived at better conditions including Cu from Dunkeswell eastwards. Looking back West from there, the convergence had completely disappeared - narrow escape, I think.

It was straight forward from there home, though the day was fading by the time I got back into Wiltshire. After a slow climb near Porton Down to a generous final glide height, I arrived back at 1845. Three hours out and nearly four hours back!

To sum up: in three days, that’s a wide selection from the gamut of gliding life!

Bude and the receding cloud-line
The long awaited The Soaring Engine Volume Three is now available. Volume Three describes how a pilot can learn to achieve a higher standard of performance in any of the soaring disciplines. This entails a knowledge of speed flying techniques, an investigation into the decision making abilities of pilots when under pressure, some suggestions for training, and an outline of the specific requirements for success in competition, distance or record flying.

Combined with the information set out in Volume One (the basics of using ridge and thermal lift to soaring in both flatland and mountain terrain) and Volume Two (wave and convergence systems), the trilogy aims to enable soaring pilots to achieve their goals in any part of the sport they choose to pursue.

One of the great joys of gliding is that it is many things to many people. Whilst our first steps typically revolve around learning to fly the glider, we soon start to set ourselves ever more challenging goals. Whether that be flying our first cross-country flight or entering our first competition, to setting a new national record or winning an international medal. Put simply, gliding is far more than just a form of aviation.

In the first two volumes of The Soaring Engine covered the phenomenon of Thermal, Ridge, Wave and Convergence lift. This third volume describes the techniques and processes required to extract performance from the atmosphere. In other words, now we understand how the soaring engine works, we need to learn to drive it - fast, consistently, and in all conditions.

This needs skills that you can learn, and that you can practice. With motivation, dedication, and armed with the right information and processes, you can achieve your goals.

Extracts from The Soaring Engine Volume Three

The climb/cruise threshold

If you set your threshold at four knots, these are your decisions
Thermal selection is about improving your average rate of climb by using the best thermals. You need to know when to stop for a climb and when to leave it. It’s vital to think ahead. Therefore, when cruising you must know how strong a thermal you can expect to find. When climbing you must monitor the rate of climb and leave when you think you can find better. This figure is your climb/cruise threshold.

Continually assess the conditions ahead. What are the climb rates that you might achieve? If you have several chances to climb at four knots or more, then that’s your threshold. Leave the current thermal if it’s less than four knots average and don’t stop until you hit a four-knot climb. If you suspect that the thermals are dying then revise your threshold. Wind it down a bit and accept weaker climbs. Or if you get to good thermals without losing much height, and it looks even better ahead, then raise your threshold value and carry on.

This climb/cruise threshold not only functions as a decision-making tool for accepting or rejecting climbs, it also defines many of your soaring strategies. It sums up in one figure what you expect of the lift ahead, how fast you might cruise, the maximum deviation away from track you can afford, and how you should handle the glider as you pass through thermals.

**Lift en-route**

Your average cross-country speed is controlled not only by the rate of climb in thermals but also by the lift and sink between them. This applies to the final glide. If you can fly in lift between the last thermal and the goal, you can improve your glide angle. You could set off below your optimum final glide and make up the height on the way, improving your overall speed.

Look at the sky along the route of the final glide and add up the extra bits of energy you can see. “Three nice clouds, they’re all working well today, that’s got to be 200’ under each one. I’ll set off 600’ under glide.” You might even decide to stop for another climb.

Speed flying theory tells us that if you’re gliding with a three-knot MacCready setting and then you run into a much stronger thermal, say a six-knot climb, you’ll be faster if you take the climb. Climb to the required height for the faster glide and set off again. In practice this doesn’t always work. Extra height in hand can be useful!

Copies can be obtained from:

**Navboys Limited**
Rourke’s Drift, Lasham Airfield
www.navboys.com
sales@navboys.com

**BGA Shop**
www.bgashop.co.uk

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G Dale

info@thesoaringengine.co.uk
Camphill became the home of the Derbyshire and Lancashire gliding club in 1935 and is one of the few gliding clubs in the United Kingdom still operating from its original location. It had been the site of the 1954 World Gliding Championships, when it rained most of the time thus earning the site the enduring nick-name of “Damphill”.

In August 1956, Camphill was the battle ground for my endurance flight. At the time I was a Flight Cadet at the RAF College Cranwell and on the first year of a three-year course. I had just 13 gliding hours and 126 launches to my credit at the time.

The flight was to be in the RAF College Prefect, a glider designed in 1948 by Slingsby Sailplanes to be a British equivalent of the older German designed Grunau, from which many of its design features clearly originated.

It did not have “performance” as we know it now but it had good handling and was easy to fly. It was utilitarian and, with its open cockpit, this made five-hour flights something of an exercise in survival. The pilot was exposed to the elements and, although the cockpit had a windscreen, this did little more than keep the wind off the face. But I was only 18 then and such things didn’t seem to matter.

The day, 8 August 1956, dawned with that long-hoped-for wind blowing from the west. I awoke to the sound of the tent flapping, the first time this had happened in the seven days that our expedition had been at this hill-top gliding site. As if with like-mind, all of us on the expedition responded to the flapping canvas as though it were an alarm clock. It was 0500 hrs and only just light.

We had only three single seat gliders between the twelve of us and eight of us needed to fly our five-hour flights. With an early start, say 0600 take-off, we could get two flights of five hours out of each glider and thus six of us could get our five-hour flights completed. No one dawdled because clearly time was vital if we were to achieve these ambitions.

“Who was to fly first” was an entirely undemocratic decision by the Duty Instructor; it was after all a military rather than civilian expedition! There was no ballot or drawing of lots and I did not complain because he decided that I should fly first. Benevolent dictatorships have their place in the world and gliding has had plenty of them. Indeed, there is some truth to the notion that all the best run airfields have such a system. Flying and democracy don’t easily mix!

A frenzy of activity; the gliders inspected, the weather forecast obtained by telephone, a decent breakfast around the camp cooker (it was to be a long flight and without food beforehand it would be inviting an early onset of fatigue), and when all this was done, a briefing by the Duty Instructor.

The forecast confirmed that it was going to be a good day for ridge flying. There was a steady 15 knots wind from the west blowing directly up the hill with the wind increasing with height but maintaining a westerly direction. A warm front was approaching but was not expected to produce its bad weather until nightfall; all being well we should get the programmed flights in!

Such weather conditions are ideal for the formation of mountain waves and the forecaster had anticipated that it should be possible to locate them and soar above the rough and turbulent hill lift and into the smoother air aloft. It was an exciting prospect.
No sooner had we moved the winch out to its site on the west edge of the airfield, towed the gliders to the launch point and pulled the launch cable out, than cloud formed on the hill, obscuring the sky and plunging us into a visibility of a mere 200 yards (we didn’t “do” metres in those days and it was still an imperial mind set in the RAF in more senses than one!) Flying was out of the question until the weather cleared.

“What had happened to the forecast?” Or more correctly, “what had happened to the weather?” It had defied the meteorologist and ignored his predictions! It wasn’t that he was wrong – he just had not mentioned the possibility of orographic cloud. All that had happened was that a patch of moist air had moved in from the west and, in ascending the hill, had cooled to below its dew point, thus forming the cloud that swirled around us.

There was nothing to do but sit and wait it out and hope it cleared quickly. But, as every minute ticked by the chances of the day going to plan faded and I was grateful to have been selected to be in the first group of pilots that day to attempt the daunting task of soaring for five hours, not a second less would do, it had to be five hours and preferably a little more to be sure.

As the early morning ticked by and, as unseen by us in the swirling mist, the sun rose appreciably above the horizon and the visibility got worse. Gloom and despondency descended!

By now it was 8:30 am and there seemed little likelihood of it clearing in less than a few hours. But we were wrong. By 9am the cloud, although still present, had lifted so that its base was several hundred feet above the hill; clearly the air had dried out sufficiently for the condensation level to rise accordingly. In the distance and in most directions the sun could be seen breaking through the cloud in shafts of amber light. The day was once again back on and spirits rose.

The duty instructor was launched at 9:15, on a quick flight to check the weather, and he returned after a few minutes to report a cloud base of 500 feet above the site with the ridge giving good lift.

By now the wind was getting close to 20 knots and I was launched at 9:35 on what would be, if successful, my longest ever flight, not just in a glider but in any aircraft.

I knew it was going to be cold and, despite it being August, my earlier experiences of open cockpits had taught me about wind chill and how, even on warm days, the airflow past the glider would penetrate clothing and extract heat from one’s body. I was mindful, also, of the prospect for wave flying held out by the weather forecast and, with a bit of luck, I might make contact with wave and climb to, who knew what height, 5,000 feet or more? It would certainly be cool up there.

Long pants (RAF Issue of course), pullover, two pairs of socks, as well as my normal clothing, had all gone on underneath my RAF flying suit. I looked rotund and was made only too aware of my “growth, as I sat squeezed into the Prefect’s cockpit.

The launch was brief and to the point; it was little more than a quick surge of energy, enough to get the glider into the invisible torrent of air flowing up the hill. I doubt if the launch took me above 250 feet,
it was so brief that I didn’t even have time to notice the height on the altimeter, but, within seconds of flying over the edge of the hill itself, the Prefect and I were whisked well above its top. Clearly the hill lift was surging with energy and all I had to do was to stay within its influence for a further 4 hours and 59 minutes. It was a daunting thought, more so as a full realisation of the implications of so doing, whilst strapped into a cramped cockpit, dawned on me.

The lift was turbulent. With each gust would come a fresh surge to heave the glider upwards by a few feet, only leaving it to sink back to its previous height once the gust had passed. Each spur and knoll on the hill would produce its own local boost to the lift as would each gully as it collected and channelled the air upwards.

The little glider’s behaviour was more akin to a small boat on a choppy sea than to an aeroplane and, although it was not difficult to control, it needed all my attention to do. Not only was it going to be chilly but it was also going to be tiring.

The west facing ridge at Camphill is several miles long but the portion attached to the airfield on top of the hill is barely half a mile in length and is at the southern end part of the plateau on which the airfield is located.

For the first half an hour I contented myself with flying up and down this particular stretch, crabbing over the ground above the ridge only slowly since the glider spent most of its time bucking the wind and holding its position over the ridge. A few seconds inattention and the Prefect and I would have found ourselves downwind of the hill and with insufficient performance in the glider to penetrate back through the wind and into the support of that curtain of rising air I knew as the hill lift. Survival was the name of the game on this particular flight and I had to condition myself to being content with what promised to be a rather boring few hours just flying up and down the hill sustained aloft by its up-draught.

It must have been after an hour or so of this that I became a little impatient with my lot and decided, with some caution, to explore a little further afield. In doing this I was conscious of my relative lack of hill soaring experience and of the Prefect’s modest performance. One mistake in my flying technique might demand more performance to recover from than the glider could deliver and thus leave me with no option other than a premature landing in a field at the bottom of the hill.

Not only would this deny me the prospect of completing the requisite five-hour flight for my Silver C, and I had no notion as the when the next opportunity to fly it might occur, but the thought of landing in one of the small fields in the valley filled me with trepidation. I had had no training in such things, it wasn’t done in those days, and I feared for the worst if I were to get it wrong.
With each field surrounded by substantial stone walls, typical of that part of England, the penalties for landing short or beyond the intended spot were all too obvious. The walls had stood for several hundred years and were not likely to lie down for me or for anyone. They were solid in the extreme.

Each time I flew north along the ridge I allowed the Prefect to extend her beat north a few hundred yards further than the previous one. After several such excursions I found myself at least a mile away from the airfield and, from my vantage point of only about 500 ft above it, it looked a long way off. It was certainly too far away to glide to with the height available without the benefit of the lift from the hill. It was a strange sensation and one that I had not experienced before, seeing the airfield apparently out of range but being possible to reach without any loss of height.

I knew this to be correct from the theory but did not yet have the confidence to trust that it would happen. I just had to try it out! I tiptoed back the way I had come, tracking down the top of the ridge but, as before, heading more into the increasingly strong wind to maintain position and flying crab-like over the ground. To my surprise I reached the airfield no lower than the height at which I started the beat and my confidence soared.

Next time I flew even further north along the ridge and returned, once again, to the airfield successfully. I now felt completely confident in my ability to negotiate the full length of the hill and began to concentrate on enjoying the flight to the full. I varied our route along the hill, dwelled in places where the lift was strongest, to get up to cloud base, now at 600 feet, and passed quickly over those places where the lift was mediocre. I experimented by flying more into wind from the hill and then right over its top to find where the lift was best and, almost without realising it, 2 hours of my requisite 5 had passed without the boredom I had been led to expect. But I still had 3 hours to go!

Shortly after 10.45 am the cloud began to disperse, particularly at the north end of the ridge, and the sun came through to add its warmth to the proceedings. Feeling somewhat chilly by now I took the cue and moved along to the north end of the ridge into the sunshine to seek a warm-up.

But, no sooner had the Prefect and I slid form under the murk or the low cloud, that prospects, more exciting than warmth, entered the arena. With the low cloud now cleared from above I could see a tell-tale lenticular cloud signifying the presence of wave lift, something I had heard about but never experienced and it was something I was eager to find out about. I had heard that it offered almost magical qualities of smoothness.

A whole new prospect for completing the flight now opened up – if I could only manage to establish contact with the wave I would be able to soar above the turbulent air and enjoy the remainder of the flight in relative comfort. "Relative" because nothing that has a wooden seat, is draughty and cramped can ever be described as comfortable – but it flew and that made it acceptable.

On flying to the northern end of the Camphill ridge I confidently expected to sail straight into smooth wave lift and to be carried aloft in silky smooth air to some exalted height. I was naive in the extreme and had no real notion as to the techniques required to establish contact with wave.

In my ignorance I had almost zero knowledge as to the best techniques for contacting wave as very little had been written about it in those days and not many pilots were practised at it, except at Camphill where there were experts. I had assumed that it was a vertical extension of the hill lift.

Little did I realise then that wave is triggered primarily by slopes in the lee of the wind; there was pre-war experience of this in Cumbria.
where some epic flights were done using the Helm Wind off the Pennines. But that was about it in terms of what I knew.

The lenticular that I could see showed wave created by the air flowing down Mam Tor and the hills to the west and, whether or not it enhanced or dampened the hill lift I was riding, depended on its wavelength. With the “wrong” wavelength the downward part of the wave system could coincide with the upgoing lift of the ridge and cancel it out, thus depositing the glider back on the ground.

I was lucky. As I flew to the northernmost tip of the ridge the hill lift remained steady. I turned and flew south again, back to where the cloud was dispersing, back past the airfield, turn and then fly north again.

There was clearly wave influence around but how to locate it was the problem exercising my mind. I had overheard some of the pundits at the club talking about finding wave in the valley to the west of Camphill ridge but, with the height I was able to attain and, with the low performance of the Prefect, I could not see how I could penetrate into the valley very far.

I compromised. On the next northwards tack I planned to move a little bit further west towards the valley whilst taking care to remain in the embrace of the hill lift. It seemed to work because as I got towards the northern end of the ridge I noticed that I was about 100 feet higher than I was the previous time over the same point. I was now about 700 feet above the airfield and clearly things had improved. The lift we were in was localised over a small promontory near the north end of the ridge and I decided to keep the Prefect in that localised lift by guiding her through a series of S turns. She responded.

The variometer showed a steady rate of climb of a little over 100 ft/min, the altimeter climbed slowly past 1,000 feet and the air became smoother than anything I had previously experienced. From all that I had heard about wave this met all the criteria and just had to be the real thing. It was unforgettable.

As we got higher, 1,500 feet, the wind strengthened noticeably and I found that all I had to do was to point the glider’s nose directly into wind, fly at about 35 knots, a perfectly reasonable speed for such a glider, and thus maintain position in the area of best lift. If I had slowed the Prefect down to her stalling speed of 26 knots, we would have drifted slowly backwards and if I had flown faster than the required 35 knots we would have inched forward.

We topped out at about 2,500 feet at which height the lift given by the wave equalled the sink rate of the Prefect. Above, and in most directions, I could see the tell-tail signs of wave: lenticular clouds. But I seemed to be helpless in locating the better waves because clearly mine was only a minor one. I tried moving out into the valley in the hope of contacting something stronger, but to no avail. I dared no move back behind the hill and I hadn’t the courage to go further north towards the Ladybower Reservoir for fear of not making it back to the safety of the hill lift at Camphill, should my search for better wave be fruitless. The priority was, after all, to complete my 5 hours. I decided to stay put and sit it out. I now had only 2 hours to go.

From now on the rest of the flight was to be relatively straightforward; I wandered up and down the weak wave at the north end of the ridge at heights in the order of 2,500 feet but was soon aware of deep chilling despite the surfeit of clothing I was wearing and my backside...
was becoming exceedingly uncomfortable after such a long period strapped to a hard wooden seat!

Counting the minutes to go was counterproductive as it merely made time pass more slowly. Therefore, I tried to take my mind off the discomfort by enjoying the scenery. To the west was Mam Tor with its distinctive rocky slopes, to the north was the huge Ladybower Reservoir, scene for some of the training for the Dambusters raid only 13 years previously.

Above me and to the west a privately owned Olympia from Camphill was soaring in the wave at about 5,000 feet. I pushed forward from my weak wave into the valley again to try to contact the higher wave system but every time I tried I made almost no progress into wind and lost more height than I could afford to spare. So better to stay where I was, as I only had an hour to go.

Then I started to get concerned about the weather. Towards Manchester, I could see the cloud lowering and visibility decreasing. It was quite clear that there would be no other five-hour flights that day. And then wisps of orographic cloud started to form again over the airfield end of the ridge and, with only 40 minutes to go, I decided it was time to descend back on to the hill, as I had no intention of being stuck above cloud on such a day and with my very limited flying experience.

Spoilt by the hours spent in the smooth wave it was a wake-up call to get back on the hill and amongst the turbulence. The cloud over the airfield area was now little more than 500 feet above it and it was a challenge to avoid being pushed into it and required me to fly further away from it in the area of weaker lift to avoid doing so.

By now I was getting alarmed by the deteriorating conditions exacerbated by fatigue and cold and I found myself counting every minute. Ten minutes to go. The cloud base got lower and I was just in and out of the base, and then it began to drizzle.

Five minutes to go and I feared that the weather could force me to land early, so near and yet so far! I just had to hang on. The magic 5 hours passed, and then uncertainly as to whether I had got the time correct, when I was relieved by the duty instructor flashing me green on the Aldis lamp, the pre-arranged light signal to acknowledge that the 5 hours had been achieved and that I was clear to land. Now the tricky bit: landing.

The wind had obviously risen and the wind gradient on the final approach would be considerable. I would have to be careful not to fly downwind of the famous back wall at Camphill, a stone wall that marks the eastern boundary of the airfield and beyond which the terrain is unfriendly.

70 knots seemed a sensible speed to have in the increasingly rough conditions coupled with the huge wind shear expected when landing at Camphill. Turning finals over the wall at about 200 ft the glider was making only slow progress but by about 100 feet it was in the slower moving air and flying became easier for a normal landing in the centre of the airfield. I had made it!

The rest was straightforward, my flight was logged as 5 hours and 10 minutes. It had been memorable and highly satisfying. I’d had sight of the most glorious scenery and had been amongst the few in being able to fly and enjoy it to the utmost. Nearly an hour after I had landed, having thought that no one could stay up in the forbidding weather condition any longer, the Olympia landed. It had been to 10,000 feet and its pilot had found his way down through a gap in the clouds to the north.

John Delafield
Lake Keepit Soaring Club is Australia's second largest gliding club and arguably the most picturesque. All abilities of pilot will have an absolute ball here, from ab initio to top end cross country flying, it recently hosted the Women’s World Championships where the UK team did an amazing job. Many Lasham members have visited/instructed/coached and managed at Lake Keepit therefore there are plenty of brains to pick and discuss your trip with. Australia had had a much lower incidence of Covid-19, therefore the recovery is now well underway. Two-seat flying is back up and running. Travel restrictions are still in place for international visitors but these are likely to be lifted in the not too distant future. If you find that your flying has been limited over the UK soaring season and you are not looking forward to the long cold winter you may want to consider a trip Down Under. Val Phillips

This last climb is proving illusive, and this poses an interesting conundrum for my student. During the last few hours of today’s cross-country coaching flight, he’s been doing most of the flying. Jointly making the tactical and strategic decisions with me, while equally enjoying the highs and lows of soaring above the Australian bush. This is looking like one of the last identifiable climbs. The clutching hand of the Rangari region below is beckoning us to an out landing. Should we stay, or should we go? The eternal question. The vario finally settles at a steady rate of climb. The student elects to take the thermal and a short while later the Duo guidance computer indicates final glide. Later that evening, over a few beers and a BBQ on the clubhouse patio, my student settles into the warm glow of today’s flight. Yes, it has been a steep, but very satisfying, learning curve. As ever, I’ve also learned (or re-learned) more than I’d care to admit.

Lake Keepit Soaring Club (or LKSC) is located in a state park on the western flanks of the Great Dividing Range. About six hours drive to the north of Sydney, it’s also accessible by commercial flight and train. It’s a self-contained “camp”, primarily because the nearest infrastructure (motels, shops, bars, restaurants etc) are about forty minutes’ drive away in Tamworth (the Country Music Capital of Australia). Accommodation consists of Portakabin type structures, most with en-suite facilities and some with equipped kitchens. However, most catering is “self-cook”, prepared in the well-appointed clubhouse kitchen. The bar is an honesty refrigerator and is generally well stocked with beer, wine and soft drinks. Naturally, most evenings are balmy enough to incorporate the patio BBQ cooking facilities. This really helps to engender a convivial atmosphere.

So, what does a typical flying day consist of? Morning briefing commences at 09:00 in the classroom. This is generic and covers all types of flying from ab-initio to advanced cross country. After this, the hangar is normally unpacked and the cross-country students will get a more specific briefing, tailored for their daily requirements. Mid-morning usually sees the first soaring. Cross country flying starts
soon after that, depending on whether single or multiple coaching flights are to be accomplished. The flying day typically ends an hour or two before sunset. Again, this is usually dictated by student requirements. Pretty much any discipline can be accommodated, from first cross country to basic competition preparation. Most of the focus is centred on identifying the lift, getting the best out of a climb and running efficiently between thermals. Of course, no teaching would be complete without a safety element.

And what’s the flying weather like? Consistent, predictable and reliable would be the three words that I’d use. A week of coaching will normally afford the opportunity to fly on most, if not all, of the days. That’s not to say it’s dead easy. Far from it. Like any gliding location, each day is different, presents its own trials and tribulations and on occasion, can be downright frustrating. Cumulus filled skies are a regular feature, but blue conditions can prevail for part or all of any day. All said, the weather here is a big bonus. Better still, controlled airspace rarely limits opportunities to explore.

Logistics? Well, you’ve got to get there first! The time zone issue can be harsh and flying while fatigued isn’t an option. The suggestion would be to spend some time in one of the larger cities prior to gliding. Any type of instruction can be tiring for the student. So, most people tend to take coaching flights of three hours or less. With a long soaring day available, it would be cost effective and time savvy for two or three people to team up for a block of coaching. For example, flying a couple of hours every day. Or maybe alternating days to allow for quality rest between flights.

Wildlife? Yep, they’ve got it in spades here! The kangaroos can present a genuine flight safety hazard, so they are diligently herded from the runway prior to take-off and landing. Quite fun if you’re the designated quad bike ranger at the time. Depending on the time of year, the local fly population can be irritating. Fortunately, few survive beyond the first decent thermal. The usual suite of Australian creepy crawlies and wildlife can be seen at almost any time. However, most keep to themselves.

Here in the UK the Covid-19 issue has cruelly dealt us a double whammy. Not only have our freedoms been restricted, but we’ve witnessed some of the best Spring soaring weather that I can remember. Maybe this winter you’d like to think about setting the record straight!

Andy Aveling
After 260 hours of labour and six months’ work, the time had come to finally see if all the bits held together and whether it did the right things, in the right order.

It was 12kt SSE, good viz, very hot and blue with small, gnarly thermals giving the big-wing boys a challenge. Daren Kershaw, like a mother-hen, fussed over the details. We checked and double-checked positives, re-familiarised the cockpit layout, went through the pre-flight and hooked on. Richard Moyse was the tuggie and took up the slack.

On the ground-run, I had immediate elevator issues and a deafening noise in my left ear. I managed to sort out the trim tab and after waving around a hand at the DV panel (open because it was hot) found that closing it stopped the noise. Even the guys on the ground said it was so loud that it sounded like an engine!

I tried some increasingly aggressive stalls and and each time she stalled straight ahead. Then I did some hard banking turns, some side-slip left and right all the while listening for any ominous creaking or banging. None. Phew! During a flight of 1 hr 40 min she handled beautifully and is ready to grace the skies around Lasham once more.

Particular and sincere thanks go to Richard Moyse, who was my gracious mentor throughout, his knowledge and skills are legendary and I was proud to be a part of that work. Also a big UP for Daren Kershaw, a good friend and forever helpful. Thanks also to Gary Pullen for signing me off and all the guys at LVGC and GHC who have given help, encouragement and good advice.

Bill Bullimore
In these strange and uncertain times, we must trawl flying stories from wherever we can. I hope readers will forgive this author for dragging up a tale from the distant past and, horror of horrors, for being a yarn of powered flying. Whether I am forgiven or not, you will agree that this was a remarkable flight achieved by determination, perseverance and skill.

James Peter Obeysekere III, known as Obey, was a law student at Trinity College, Cambridge when World War II broke out. He stayed on to complete his studies but then, could not get home to Colombo, Ceylon (as it was) at the end of the war. He had learned to fly with the Cambridge University Air Squadron and had done some aircraft ferrying duties and worked for the Royal Observer Corps.

Seventy-five years ago he turned his attention to getting back to Sri Lanka or Ceylon. The passenger ships: Bibby Lines, P&O and the Orient Line, were all serving as troop carriers. A passage home was out of the question for some time.

Why not fly home? Buy a plane and fly it to Ceylon. Crazy. Even though hostilities were over, the travel routes were disorganised and damaged, but this did not deter the confident young lawyer.

Auster Aircraft was pleasantly surprised to receive an order placed by a young foreign lawyer for an Auster Autocrat Mk4 with long-range tanks. A price of £1300 was agreed.

Obey now had to find the money to pay for it. His well-to-do family had given him a generous allowance such that he was able to indulge his passion for cars. Reluctantly he sold his two Bentleys: a 3 litre and a 4½ litre supercharged model, two Frazer Nash, a Sunbeam Talbot, an Airline Saloon and a couple of Austin 7s. He kept his Royal Enfield motorbike to the last.

The Shell Oil Company helped him plan a route from one of their fuel dumps to another with safety a secondary consideration. He paid £75 for fuel in advance and eventually received a £15 refund.

What should he take with him? Blackburn Aircraft Company, who supplied the engine, sold him a toolkit consisting of pliers, a plug spanner with a feeler gauge and a screwdriver. A friend offered him an axe to cut his way out of the wreckage in the ‘unlikely event of an accident’, and he chose to carry a .22 rifle. Then there were important essentials like his tennis racquet, his University Air Squadron Blazer with its badge. The latter proved more useful than his passport. To save weight, he dispensed with a radio and the third seat.
His route was of 31 legs through three continents starting from Cambridge. His first refuelling stop was Eastleigh or Southampton International Airport as it is now. He must have flown straight over London, through the Farnborough Air Space and passed closely by Lasham. There were no ATC problems in those days, he had no radio.

Then on through France, spending a night with friends in Paris and leaving Europe from the small seaside grass airstrip at Nice.

He flew along the North African coast and noted the burned-out tanks, crashed aircraft and other debris of WWII before arriving at Cairo. Here there was a 24-hour delay as he was taken by the two comely sisters of his friend who lived there.

Then onwards, over the deserts to the most remote refuelling stop at H3, a pumping station on an oil pipe-line somewhere in Iraq. Once in

The invoice & receipt. (I like the aviation spirit at ~10p per gallon).
India, there was no Pakistan yet, he flew into Bombay. Leaving Bombay, he had to glide back again. He found his oil pressure declining and when it got to zero, he switched off the engine and glided down to a nearby airfield with all the nonchalance of youth. After an engine clean, because there was sand in the works, he flew on to Hyderabad to visit another friend, a former Cambridge Tennis Blue.

On the approach to Colombo, he was joined by an escort of a Stinson and a Tiger Moth. As part of his welcome, his father pointed out a balsa tree sapling that he had planted in case the wood was needed for repairs. The journey had taken from 6 October – 13 November 1946 and took about 80 hours flying time.

The aircraft, VP-CAO, was given a Ceylon registration, and was presented to the Colombo Flying Club. It was used as a trainer for many years until it crashed in flames on take-off, consuming itself and its crew of two. The wreckage was restored and survives in the Sri Lankan Aviation Museum.


Note by editor: See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Peter_Obeyesekere_III

If after the lockdown you were given the choice of:
A) a dream holiday with your partner for a week
B) going gliding with friends

Would you choose:
1. a flatland site?
2. a mountain site?
3. a competition?
When I was a boy scout... just the day before yesterday in Grimshaw time, my entire patrol was once chased up a tree by a herd of enthusiastically interested cows down at the bottom of Gilwell Park... the famous scout camp site.

As we all sat on a long branch just above the milling beasts, we agreed that cows were basically harmless. The problem was they were a lot bigger than us and no-one wanted to climb back down and prove the theory! So from an early age I knew that knowledge and confidence are two different things!

And this of course is very relevant in gliding. You get given a lot of knowledge, but where do you get the confidence to act on it? Yet another subject not covered in any training syllabus. Not at my level anyway!

There are two basic problems with confidence:

1) It varies... it can go up and down. And you seem to need increasing amounts of it as your ventures increase...

2) Every fool... every total idiot... has far more of it than you do!

Let's look at your Big Day. You have a personal briefing from the Duty Instructor... perhaps from the CFI Himself (don't look him in the eye... just say 'Sir' and lower the head slightly). You're about to cut the airfield umbilical and fly at least 31.068 miles... yes it's your 50K Day... whatever a 'K' is. Gliding revolves around 'K's... God knows why. Many aspects require your attention for fifty of them but a vital one... confidence... looms large and needs looking at more closely.

As you creep up the launch queue checking and rechecking it's a good time to rub in Grimshaw's No.1 piece of advice: Never EVER think that you've got gliding sussed! Even World Champions don't make that mistake! Despite what you hear on the telly, you do not 'master' the air any more than you 'conquer' a mountain. You may, however, on certain days... if you are bold enough... diligent enough... and experienced enough... be permitted, by Higher Powers, to go a bit further... or a bit higher... or a bit faster. That's it. And that's all it'll be today too. Please remember this at all times... especially when confidently over-ruddering slow turns.

Mind you, it's unlikely you'll be overconfident because your first cross-country is usually a doubly strange experience. Not only are you heading away into the unknown... but you're also about to do what you've always carefully avoided... despite cunning instructors trying to lure you into it. You'll be deliberately flying out of gliding range of the airfield... EEK!

During your local solo stooges you had plenty of opportunities to examine this mysterious boundary zone... the one that instructors have down to a fine line. I bet you scared yourself once or twice... forgot you were downwind and you hadn't realised the wind had freshened. I bet you came in a bit tight... and hoped no-one noticed!

Now instructors can be an evil lot. Dave Bowtell once yanked the airbrakes full open and held them there just as I was starting to turn towards High Key "Oh Look" quoth he, "You've suddenly hit ten down sink... I wonder what you'll do about that..." Threats of culling his annual whisky ration cut no ice. They do it deliberately to make sure you don't attempt a normal circuit when too low. Because that's when accidents happen. "Just head straight to the nearest part of the..."
"airfield at your most efficient speed" they say if you’re a long way out "and see how it goes".

They’ve probably got their eye on an emergency landing area just in case they’ve overcooked it too... but they never tell you that! However with no headwind surprises airfields tend to look further away than they actually are. You’ll probably come over the boundary not much lower than normal... but your instructor will discuss the ins and outs of that particular approach with you. Remember... every approach is different. In fact every flying site is different!

But my point is that if, when solo, you do happen to get too low... and you approach exactly as you’ve been taught... you tuck in early but safely with no attempt at a conventional circuit... good manoeuvring speed with no dangerous low, slow, final turn... the duty instructor is still liable to come up and demand an explanation! Telling him you took excellent, sound decisions cuts no ice either. No-one warns you about this!

Grimshaw’s advice is to stand firm. Say you hit ten down sink or whatever and flew exactly as instructed. The duty fuhrer will examine the sky from whence you emerged and form his own opinion! One of two things will happen: Either he will say "Don't do it again." or he'll put you back on checks... depending how nervous he is!

I saw this happen to a chap by exactly the same instructor who had, only the previous day, been hammering-in this cut-in-early procedure... Mr Bowtell again! Our dear Rising Air Editor offers a small crumb of comfort in this impossible confidence-knocking situation. "Remember:" he says "Your club subscription includes one free bollocking a year at no extra charge!"

It can be fascinating asking our Venerable Ones how they were taught. In days of yore procedures were not so carefully formalised. Instructors had more leeway and some characters liked to teach you lessons you didn’t forget! In the bar an older chap told me that when he was young his instructor deliberately let him get too far out. "Do yer think yer can you get back, laddie?" he was asked.

"Oh.... crikey... er... I don't think so..." the student said... nervously.

"I don't think so either" the Instructor agreed "So what yer going to do about it?"

"I don't know... crash?"

"No yer chump... what do gliders do when they cannae get back?"

"Oh er... land in a field?"

"Right... so yer’d better pick one... fast!"

"What ME!!!? Blimey... YOU HAVE CONTROL... "

But the instructor was having none of it. "Oh no yer don’t!" he said emphatically. "You got us into this predicament... you’re going to get us out of it!" and the student was made to reassess the wind... pick a decent-sized field very quickly... watch for poles and wires... check the slope... plan an approach instantly with an alien reference point. Over the hedge with two thirds airbrake... land nicely... find the farmer and help de-rig!

You don't forget lessons like that! I doubt he ever flew too far out again but I should point out that as far as I know this not the current BGA method of teaching. The other point is of course that field landings probably held less terror for him after that than they do for me!

I mention this because such tales tend to hover in the back of your mind as you look for a good thermal for your first cross country flight. You might have been briefed to climb to at least three thousand feet AGL before you set off and this is good advice depending what your site’s like.

Grimshaw says generally get high and stay high... up to the limit of stolen airspace! But however high you get there still comes that lump-in-throat moment when you deliberately break all your instincts for self-preservation and fly on past the no-no line! You look back... during thermalling turns... and you ask yourself "Could I still make it back from here?" Maybe... maybe... and then the next tasty cumulus
catches your attention... and it's all softly settled... no! You're off... you're away!

Now it's all up to you... and the next cumulus. And the one after that. There's no easy landing now! Keep an eye on your heading but don't over-navigate... that small village probably isn't on the half million map. Identify larger towns and features... but also enjoy a strange and wonderful new kind of freedom! Sat navs make it easy... but they could be programmed wrong or have a naff battery... which was what happened on my third XC to Abingdon in my beloved Skylark.

From north of Basingstoke I had to do the entire trip from the map, mechanical vario and first principles. A chart is a legal requirement but this is your first cross-country in a cramped single-seater with sensitive controls. It's no place to discover that the huge awkward map needs completely re-folding. Trust me on this... fold it in the launch queue... and save the dodgy aerobatics!

Check your position regularly and allow a safety margin for controlled airspace... even if it has just been blatantly and unnecessarily stolen from you which it almost certainly will have been! There's scores of things you should and shouldn't do so I won't try to pre-empt your briefing. But remember... your altimeter no longer reads AGL. Use the Mk1 eyeball when low!

I confess that not being hugely experienced I still get a bit twitchy below 2000’. Are there usable fields in range? I've always found lift by 1700 feet or so but if not... well... don't bite your nails in fearful trepidation. Or get distracted by a tiny flick on the vario at the last minute. You should know where the last usable field was... just programme in the right attitude!

Below 1400’ (Colin would say 1500’) say out loud: "Look I'm a man of Science and Ability... I've passed Field Landings 1 and 2! I have my XC Endorsement. I am perfectly capable of putting this machine here down into that field there without doing too much damage... everyone better believe it... here we go!" Don't cramp the circuit... Lasham is huge... fields can be small. Two and a bit fields out is often about right.

Confidence... see? But the right kind! Our editor says that oddly enough it tends to increase with practice! Because next time we'll be going on an 'expotition' as Pooh Bear would call it. We shall be going on the club foray to mountain country where practically nothing is familiar. And the right kind of confidence is what you're going to need... in spades!

Try not to bite your nails... you'll need them for scratching

Erenger Grimshaw

Grimshaw left me an awkward space, so I found this photo of Lasham's CFIs taken in August 2010: Derek Piggott, Terry Joint, Graham McAndrew, Gordon MacDonald, Colin Watt. There were interregnums: eg Phil Philips between TJ and Graham, Les Creed while DP away filming. The photo is on Gordon MacDonald's Facebook page, but I was one of several people taking this picture. Arranging them all in one place at the same time was like herding cats! JMc
Who’s who

(all lists are alphabetical. Some posts are part-time)

Committee of Management
Patrick Naegeli (Chairman)
Nick Hoare
Alix Pentecost
Mike Philipott
Ginny Pringle
Gary Pullen (Vice-chairman)

General Manager
Gavin Spink

Hon Treasurer
John McCullagh

Flying staff
Colin Watt (Chief Flying Instructor)
Jordan Bridge (DCFI)

Office staff
Joan Carey (Finance manager)
Sue Cook
Sharon Farr
Angela McVie
Sharon White

Workshop
John Brooke (Part time)
Stuart Clay (Licensed Engineer)
Richard Moyse (Aircraft Workshop Manager)
Gayl Wheelwright (Aircraft Maintenance Manager)

Cleaners
Keith & Barbara Chiverton

Facilities and winch
Colin Currie (Facilities Manager)
Mateusz “Matt” Gocek (Part-time winch driver and workshop fitter)
Paul Haliday (Winch driver)
Paul Osborne (Groundsman)
Gary Pullen (Part-time facilities)

Restaurant and bar franchisees
Abi Buckland “The Flight Deck” Restaurant
Jaison Beeson “51 Degrees North” Bar
01256 384 910

Other roles
Vacant (Youth Scheme)
Dave Hopgood (Tugmaster)
Colin Watt (Airspace)
Henry Freeborn (Safety Officer)
Colin Watt (Child Protection Officer)

Sub-committee chairmen
Caravan - Bill Bullimore
Catering - Maureen Pullen
Competitions - Christine Bullimore
Flying - Colin Watt
Single-seaters - Rick Bastin

Volunteers
Throughout the Society there are many other volunteers and occasional employees. These are too numerous to mention but they always have our thanks.

Lasham Trust
Donations to make Lasham even better. The trustees are: Graham Garnett, Nigel Mallender, and the Society’s chairman.

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