



Newsletter – March 2012

Open weekend

This will take place over the weekend of 2nd/3rd June. Cheryl Smith has agreed to take the lead on this again and preliminary arrangements are now being made. Please support her and this event with time and assistance as it can generate significant income and attract new members. It is our showcase event.

The weekend is the Diamond Jubilee weekend with both Monday and Tuesday being Bank Holidays, the latter being for Jubilee celebrations. Fixing the date for the open weekend was difficult given other commitments and the need to ensure that members flying opportunities are not unreasonably restricted, but on balance this was felt to be the best choice. If members wish, the club can be open for flying on both the Bank Holidays, so with the soaring/task week beforehand and bank holidays there will be plenty of flying time available.

Flying time and reduced flying fees for the Junior (as in KHA & FZF)

The more temperate winter weather than that which we have experienced over the previous 2 winters has produced an increase in launches and hence flying time and revenue from club gliders which puts the income above that anticipated. Hence the reduced soaring fee of 20p per minute for February which has been extended until the end of March. The treasurer will continue to monitor this and any further opportunities to increase value for members will I am sure be supported by the committee. That said our costs in running the club continue to rise, as I am very well aware do the costs we all face individually, not least in fuel to get to the club, so as always it is a difficult balance.

Membership

I am pleased to report that membership levels are holding up well, although as always we would like and need more. A concern is the current lack of ab initio pilots. If you encounter any potential members at the club do please go out of your way to make them welcome and at ease. Simple tasks which we mostly take for granted such as safely crossing the field, are at first alien, so we must be sure to help and assist rather than berate the unfortunate offender after the event please. Which leads me on to.....

Marketing and recruiting

I feel that we should be doing more to actively market the club and sport. Our membership is drawn from a wide geographical area and we do little active promotion of DSGC beyond the Open Weekend and that is mostly local. I would like to explore the possibility of assembling a brief presentation outlining what we do and achieve, aimed particularly but not exclusively at younger potential members. This might use Power Point or similar and could be the basis of a pitch at clubs, schools, associations etc across the catchment area, capitalising on the local knowledge and contacts of our membership. A few minutes of slides or video might well be more successful and better value than conventional advertising, particularly if it were subtly targeted. Maybe it could be in a form that we can send or email to potential organisations. Does anybody have any experience of putting this sort of thing together to at least start the ball rolling?

Club flying during course weeks

The weeklong courses are funded by the course members so they must have exclusive use of club gliders other than on Wednesdays and Thursdays when the senior course instructor will make at least one Junior and one 2 seater available for club flying. On other days, subject to approval from the course instructor on the day, private gliders may rig and winch launch under arrangements determined by the course instructor, which may well be a 2 line system with the course gliders having priority for cables.

Private gliders can of course make arrangements for aerotow launching independent of the course activities as per the published arrangements for ad hoc flying on non club flying days.

The intention is to make the facilities available to members as much and often as possible. It will to some extent be a trial this year, to continue if successful or as with all matters of this sort, subject to refinement if necessary.

Showers

Andrew Muggleston has taken on the long overdue complete refurbishment of the showers. Work is going well thanks to meticulous planning and advance preparation on his part. We are grateful to Andrew for the time he has already put into this using his skills and resources and of course to all those who have assisted. We have the course weeks, soaring week, inter club meeting and open weekend during the summer and the new facility will be a great improvement for our members.

BGA Regional safety meeting.

The CFI, Club Safety Officer, and I attended this last month. I will take this opportunity to draw to your attention some of the more relevant and salient points which we were briefed upon.

Unsecured canopies There has been a worrying increase in these incidents. The BGA view is that if on completion of cockpit checks the launch is delayed, then the **full sequence** must be repeated before the cable is re-attached.

Rigging errors Again there has been an increase in incidents of incorrect or incomplete rigging with the inevitable and usually catastrophic result. Private gliders are at greater risk. With the improving weather and more owners rigging the risk level will increase. Advice from the BGA is that after rigging **a full and separate DI and pin check** must be completed. Also rigging (and DI) should be carried out as a single operation without interruption and you must respect this when others are rigging.

Overall there has been a sustained improvement in the sport's safety record.

Water supply

Legislation on private water supplies changed recently and given that we provide sustenance and facilities for the general public (and of course ourselves!) and the remote location, the potential implications of this caused me some concern. East Devon District Council as the enforcing authority recently asked to make an inspection and carry out a safety audit and risk assessment which they duly did. Some small items were identified as needing attention, which have been dealt with and whilst doing so the opportunity has been taken to change the filters and purification equipment and to tackle some long overdue preventive maintenance to the pumping equipment, both at the spring source and the clubhouse pressure system which is well under way. William Pope has helped greatly with this and applied his electrical skills where necessary. This will improve the quality and reliability of the supply. No more flying time as a result but the tea should taste even better.

The field

I have opened discussions with the authorities on the possibility of carrying out some levelling of the field. This obviously has to be done in a manner and programme that will not restrict flying activities. A possible plan of action is emerging which I will keep you posted upon as it evolves, but at the present involves rolling and compaction of areas which are uneven and limited surface filling of low spots. The source of the problem appears to be caused by mining for iron ore which involved digging pits up to about 8ft deep, mostly circular with the spoil cast around the perimeter and which were left unfilled until the field was much more recently levelled for grazing (or gliding?). Archaeologists have proved that the iron mining activities were well established before the Roman invasion, sufficient that the Romans saw an opportunity and took over the industry. Thus any excavation (or breaking of the surface) on the field will involve investigations and supervision which will be costly, quite possibly prohibitively so. Whetstone mining was a later activity and was concentrated on the sides of the hill rather than our field area. Not strictly relevant to flying activities but it explains the origins of the humps and bumps.

Legacy

The club was endowed with a legacy last year from the late Mr Dyer, a former member, and the committee resolved to use this for a identifiable projects or assets rather than absorb it into general funds. We now have some new picnic benches which are proving popular and a weather station will shortly be fitted on the roof of the main hangar. This will relay data to the clubroom and eventually onto the website. Jill Harmer has been instrumental in researching and sourcing this and we are grateful particularly for her expertise on the weather station technology. Improvements to the webcam system and black-out blinds for the clubroom are also planned.

Instructor training

Congratulations to Rowan Smith who has achieved basic instructor rating. Thanks are due to the instructors who steered him through the training process.

Site security

Please can we be vigilant to ensure that the clubhouse and buildings are locked and secure, the alarm set, and that the gate is locked when leaving the site at the end of the day. There have been incidents in the area recently which demonstrate the need to do so and the potentially appalling consequences of not doing so. We mustn't put our equipment and flying activities at unnecessary risk.

Winch launching reminders!

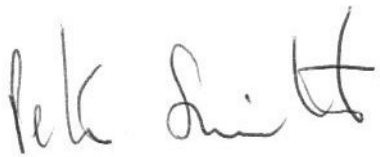
I relay the following requests:

Crosswind launches. When launching into a crosswind please ensure that you lay off to windward. It improves the launch, reduces wear on the cables and keeps the falling cable in the field. Failure to do so may mean the launch being curtailed!

Launch failure and cable release. As soon as safe to do so after a failed launch, please endeavour to operate the release so as to drop the strop within the field. We are losing an unacceptably high number of strops which are expensive to replace and if missing at the launchpoint cause frustrating and unnecessary delays.

Thank you.

With best wishes for the soaring season ahead!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'P' and 'S'.

16th March 2012