



Scottish Airsports Club

Latest News

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Aberdeen Fly-In

The Aberdeen HG & PG Club is hosting a fly-in and party over the weekend of 31st May/1st June to celebrate our 25th birthday. As part of this we have been given permission to operate the aerotow tug from the gliding club at Aboyne. Much hyped as the UK's premier wave soaring site this could be a great chance to see what can be achieved if you place a hang glider in the right part of the sky! Donald and co are up for this so, weather permitting, we will be flying from Aberdeenshire that weekend. The gliding club wishes to limit the number of hang gliders to 15-20 max, but I guess this should be more than enough for the one tug anyway. Unfortunately, Doodlebugs / Mosquitoes won't be welcome to use the gliding club but there may be an opportunity to fly these from a nearby field. More details about the weekend will be posted on the club website soon (<http://www.ahpc.org.uk>) or get in touch with Geoff (geoff_may@hotmail.com).

The Two AIs Go Dual Aerotowing

The Scottish Airsports Club was the scene of an important event on Sunday 16th March 2003 when we attempted to aerotow Al Huntly (pilot) and Allan Phillips (guinea pig) in the dual Discovery glider. This was made all the more significant by the fact the two AIs were boldly going where no man (or woman) had gone before – dual aerotowing had never been done before in Scotland.

Your intrepid correspondent was chosen for the role of passenger for this historic flight from a long list of hopefuls for a number of important reasons, and being recognised as an exceptional hang glider pilot in my own right wasn't one of them. However, I was there, I was up for it, and unlike Al I'm not very heavy, so I got the job!

The first problem was to get the hang heights sorted – no problem for Al, but I had to be a bit higher off the bar so that I didn't get in the way (as if). Luckily an old top-loading harness was found with a suitable hang loop which I managed to pour myself into. Thank God for front loaders.

We then had various discussions about what strength of weak links to use where, and how to attach the tow line. Various different views were expressed, highlighting the fact that we'd never done this before, and making me feel slightly more of a pioneer than I really wanted to be. In the end we set up the weak links and opted for attaching the tow line to both the pilot and passenger. We were using a bridle attachment as favoured by the famous Wallaby Ranch in Florida where the tow line is attached to the keel as well as the pilot. This system is supposed to significantly ease the bar pressure required to maintain sufficient airspeed.

My instructions from Al were simple enough: hold onto his harness shoulder-straps, and enjoy the ride. I would be briefed on landing nearer the time!

After all the discussions and setting up, we were finally ready to go. Were the weak links strong enough? Were we right to attach the line to both pilot and passenger? Was the bridle attachment point on the keel in the correct position?

Would the tug be powerful enough? Moving the dolly into position certainly required a hell of a push as the wheels were beginning to sink into the runway! It was time to find the answers.



With two people giving the dolly a long push to get it going, the tug accelerated down the runway taking us with it. The airspeed built up further and further until there was quite a wind noise – much more than I was used to, but we were still on the ground. Finally we lifted off, much further down the runway than for a solo glider. The air was fairly smooth and Al managed to keep station behind the tug without too much trouble. As tug and glider continued to climb everything was going well, although the climb rate wasn't huge and we were a bit low relative to the tug. Al noticed that the bar pressure was extremely light but the glider was slightly reluctant to climb. All the same, we seemed to have things well under control. Then at a height of maybe 200 feet and not much beyond the boundary of the airfield the weak link broke at the tug end, leaving us with a dangling tow rope which Al quickly released. There was an obvious large field to land in immediately below us which we had no trouble making. As we came in I got my legs out of the harness in preparation for the landing and wondered how this dual landing business would work, since Al was a little busy to deliver the promised landing briefing.

A few feet off the ground Al announced that we'd be landing on the wheels, which I was quite relieved at since we were travelling a lot faster than I thought I could run! I quickly retracted my undercarriage again, and we came in to a fast but comfortable landing on the two large wheels, and a fairly quick stop. Al had pulled off a very successful landing with no damage to glider, pilot or passenger.

The tow rope was quickly retrieved, and we carried the glider and our kit the short distance back to the airfield. Al and I were both confident that we basically had it cracked, and were very keen to have a second go. We were sure that with a couple of minor adjustments we'd have it completely sorted. Obviously we needed a not-so-weak link at the tug end of the rope. The only other change required would be to move the bridle attachment point on the keel back a little. This should make the bar pressure a bit higher, and help the glider to stay higher relative to the tug. Unfortunately before we got the chance to have another go, there was a slight incident with the tow rope and the propeller bringing an abrupt end to all aerotowing for the day, but that's another story. (See Tow-line Troubles). One thing's for sure – the Two Als will be having another go on the dual Discovery soon, and Martin's keen to get aerotowing with his rather lovely looking dual Laminar. Watch this space!

I'd like to register my thanks to Al for letting me be his passenger, to Mike for lending me the harness, and of course to Donald for towing us up. Even for a converted hang glider pilot like myself it was a great (but all too brief) experience. This is a really good way to introduce new people to the sport, and show paraglider pilots what they're missing. Rather than spend a whole day getting absolutely knackered climbing hills and ending up disillusioned with only a few seconds in the air to show for it, your first experience of hang gliding can be a minimum 15 minute flight to 2000 feet or more, really showing you what it's all about. In this way dual aerotowing should help us to significantly increase the club membership. So if you've never tried aerotowing before and want to find out just how good it is, come for a dual aerotow flight at Thornhill. Just e-mail Al Huntly at yhuntly@aillst.ossian.net and get a piece of the action!

Tow Line Troubles

Our tow line arrangement up till now has consisted of a metal ring to attach the line to the tug, a short length of rope, another metal ring, a weak link, and the remainder of the tow line. The weekend of 15th/16th March was an expensive one for the club as a result of two separate but almost identical incidents, one on each day. In each case the weak link at the tug end broke, leaving just the short length of rope with a metal ring attached to the tug. The metal ring then managed to hit the propeller, taking a sizeable chunk out of a blade. You might have thought that the wash from the prop would blow the rope and ring out of harm's way, but our prop seems to be able to suck. Hopefully we will be able to get the blades repaired rather than fork out the £275 each replacement cost.

Well, you know what they say: "Twice bitten, three times shy", so we're getting two complete new towlines from Wallaby ranch in Florida (they know how to do things, they do). The new set up will have the tug's weak link right next to the attachment point so that if it fails there is nothing left attached that can damage the prop. The new tow lines will also have a drogue chute that doesn't look like it's been through a shredder several times, and a swivel that, well, swivels. Our siezed-up non-rotating swivel was the main reason for the two weak link breaks as the material was being weakened by the tow line twisting up. These tow-lines aren't just bits of rope, they're complex, technical things you know.

Aerotow.com

A new hang glider aerotow flight park along the same sort of lines as Wallaby Ranch in Florida is opening in Spain in May this year. It is situated near Avila which is about 1 hour west of Madrid, and it is hoping to give hang gliding a boost in Europe in the same sort of way that the flight parks in USA and Australia have done. In both these countries hang gliding is now growing. The park is close to Piedrahita which is reknowned for large thermals with 15,000 foot cloud-bases and a 300km convergence line. Lovely!

At Aerotow.com, they are planning an ambitious opening event from 5th to 11th May where they aim to demonstrate that:

- PG pilots air awareness skills easily transfer to HG – providing an accelerated learning curve
- Master-class courses for HG pilots really do make a huge difference to a low-airtime pilots and their ability to sustain XC flight
- HG is safe and easy and quick to learn in a flight park environment

To help achieve this they have invited 4 world-class hang glider pilots to help in the tuition of 4 experienced paraglider pilots and 15 low-airtime hang glider pilots. The world-class hang glider pilots include:

- Kari Castle, current ladies world champion
- Ron Richardson, top UK comp pilot
- Jim Mackin, bursting with local knowledge
- Judy Leden, former world champion in both hang gliding and paragliding, as if you didn't know.

The paraglider pilots include:

- Will Gadd, current world distance record holder
- Bob Drury, vol-bivoac specialist

The low air time hang glider pilots include:

- Me!

Ken McAlpine and Gordon Ross from the club are also planning to be there that week to join in the fun. All in all it should be a fabulous week, and I'll certainly be taking my autograph book with me. I'm hoping that with all that top-class tuition I'll be able to learn how to thermal, and maybe fly the first cross-country flights of my life. I just hope the conditions are good and I manage not screw up my landings, which I've been doing rather too often recently! A full report with photos will appear in the newsletter soon.

For more information, see www.aerotow.com.

Charges

There is a list of charges up on the club notice board on the dividing wall at the back of the hangar. They are, of course, all exceptionally reasonable, so if you've got some loose change in your pocket and you want to keep your gear in the hangar, joint the aerotow syndicate, get an aerotow rating, fly to Thornhill in your microlight, experience a dual flight or whatever, here's what it'll cost.

Airfield Charges:

- Rigged Microlight £520 p.a.
- Semi Rigged £260 p.a.
- Hang Gliders £50 p.a.
- FLPA Power Units £50 p.a.
- Airfield Membership £50 p.a.
- Temporary Membership £20 (up to 3 visits)
- Microlight Landing Fee £5

Towing Charges:

- Aero-Tow Membership £15 per month
- Full Members £2 per 1000 feet
- Temporary Members £4 per 1000 feet
- Air experience Dual Aero-Tow £50 (includes £20 temporary membership)
- Aero-Tow License £200 (includes £50 airfield membership)
- Aero-Tow License Members £Free

Easter Fly-In

Another reminder that the club will be holding a Fly-In over the Easter weekend. We should have a 912 tug, winching for both hang gliders and paragliders, dual aerotowing, flights on demo gliders, camping, a barbecue, but we probably won't have a bouncy castle. For all the details, phone Ken on 0141 575 4828 or 07818 091389

Jobs Done

The track across the long runway has now been properly filled in, so that taking off or landing across it is now less likely cause you to trip up or smack your head, depending on the type of aircraft you're flying! The runway also requires regular maintenance and has been both rolled and cut in recent weeks. Thanks to everyone who has helped out.

Disclaimer

It's possible that any items in this newsletter which were written by me (and that'll be most of them) may contain significant factual errors. That's because it's much easier to print corrections in the next newsletter than to check I've got all my facts right. Plus, the corrections give me more material for the next newsletter.

By the way, if I start getting really short on material, I'll just start making things up. So to avoid reading about my latest 100km XC flight and other such fantasies, tell me what's really happening whether it's at the Scottish Airsports Club or elsewhere, and I'll bung it in the next newsletter.

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