

www.thelancashiremagazine.co.uk

October 2015

Lancashire

& North West magazine

RAMSBOTTOM • ROSSENDALE VALLEY • WHALLEY

Gliding in the North West
An audience with Patricia Routledge
Round up of the county shows
The blitz in Manchester
Haunting tales for Halloween
Hooray for Haweswater
Wonderfully wild walking country

Serving the whole of the North West, including the historic County Palatine of Lancashire, Cheshire, the Lakes, Cumbria and the cities of Manchester and Liverpool.





Gliding in the North West

Andrew Harris explains the why, where and how of gliding in our region

The sensation of gliding is amazing yet the sport is little-known and trapped by its image. Flying with no sound except the air you are passing through and can FEEL is a magical experience. If that may interest you or someone you know then read on.

Our region is served by just three gliding clubs – see our 'gliding map' - out of 85 nationwide. With only about 175 flying members from our population of more than seven million – one person in 40,000 - the potential for this fabulous sport has hardly been touched. Anybody interested should contact one of the following three gliding clubs:

- Bowland Forest Gliding Club is the only large gliding club located within the North West region. It is between Chipping and Beacon Fell and has 100 flying members. Surrounded by the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the club makes a wonderful base for flights over stunning scenery. Most gliders are owned by members singly or in syndicates but there are also seven club gliders including three 2-seaters for training. Flying membership is £220 a year reduced to £95 for student members with free membership when the cadet scheme is available from time to time. Each winch launch to about 1,000 feet costs £5 plus a small charge for longer flights. The club team (pictured) includes chief and deputy chief flying instructors Steve Robinson and Ian Ashton who oversee training for new pilots who typically go solo after 50-60 flights. For more details visit www.bfgc.co.uk or call 01995 61267.

- Derbyshire & Lancashire Gliding Club operates from a plateau at Camphill 1,350 feet above sea level (pictured) with panoramic views of the surrounding Peak District even from ground level. Located about 20 miles south east of Stockport it is outside our region but about a quarter of its 150 flying members live within it. As well as 32 privately-owned gliders the club also has seven club gliders including four 2-seaters for training. Flying membership is £395 a year reduced to £107.50 for students – or £55 for under-18s. Chief flying Instructor Peter Gray leads a team of 22 instructors



In the heart of the Peak District: the DLGC airfield at Camphill identified by the perimeter road

providing a range of training options including a five day course for those new to gliding. More information can be found on www.dlgc.org.uk or call 01298 871270.

• The Lakes Gliding Club has only 30 flying members but enjoys a base on Walney Island about 14 miles south west of Coniston Water and Lake Windermere although spectacular scenery is nearer. To achieve these distances members tow launch by a tug plane (which they built) to 2,000 feet or higher and the typical cost per launch is £30 or more. As well as private gliders the club own two 2-seaters for training led by chief flying instructor David North and deputy CFI Peter Lewis. Membership is £220 a year and £110 for students under 21 in full-time education although these sums are under review. For more information visit www.lakesgc.co.uk or call 07860 135447.

Another gliding centre in the region is 631 Volunteer Gliding Squadron

which is based at RAF Woodvale and trains air cadets. Sadly its squadron leader couldn't talk to your columnist due to 'protocols' but for unclassified information visit www.631vgs.com

“The common perception of gliding is that it is undertaken by ex-RAF types with a gung-ho attitude”

The common perception or image of gliding is that of a daring sport undertaken by male ex-RAF types with a gung-ho attitude. The reality is very different with 13-20% of flying

members under 21 and an increasing number of female pilots. All the clubs are keen to broaden their appeal and offer a range of initiatives to train boys and girls from the age of 14. The sport is regulated by the British Gliding Association with a range of European requirements likely to become mandatory in 2018. The safety record of gliding is excellent with clubs ensuring that all gliders are airworthy and proper training given not just until going solo but to develop and recognise a range of advanced flying skills. Beyond local flying, cross-country flights and aerobatics provide their own challenges for the adventurous. Safety is promoted by all BGA Clubs having a Safety Officer, the monthly publication of incident reports to ensure best practice, a rigorous instructing structure and strict pre-flight cockpit checks. Winch or towing procedures for take-off are controlled and more professional than your columnist recalls from the 1960s!



ABOVE: The BFGC team in front of the club hanger: Club chairman Bob Pettifer, vice chairman Henry Stott, chief flying instructor Steve Robinson, deputy CFI Ian Ashton, treasurer Carolyn McLay & club secretary Tony Perry. LEFT: Lewis Gray - an experienced glider pilot at 17. BOTTOM LEFT: Laura Maksymowicz: gliding is popular with women too.



Lewis Gray (pictured) is just 17 years old yet is an experienced pilot at the Bowland Forest Gliding Club. He went solo at 16 and plans a career as an airline pilot after his A levels. In the meantime he is gaining relevant experience and enjoys the 'sense of freedom' which gliding provides. Lewis says 'The club adds to my social life rather than conflicts with it' giving him a range of benefits for both work and play.

Also at Bowland Forest Laura Maksymowicz (also pictured) caught the gliding bug from her father. Laura aged 29 enjoys the 'glorious countryside' from the Pennines to the Irish Sea. Laura says: 'Every flight is different and the sense of fulfilment I feel after each good flight keeps me going for weeks afterwards'. As well as being a software engineer Laura has gliding ambitions and hopes to build on her experience to become an instructor

so that she can help others by passing on her skills and enthusiasm.

All three clubs serving our region provide varied and flexible choices for those new to gliding. Training sessions in the classroom and in the air can be undertaken intensively or piecemeal if necessary due to other commitments. Packages are available from £250 -£999. Introductory or air experience flights are typically £60-80 and offer a good way of discovering if gliding is for you.

Gliding is truly a sport for all ages and both genders. It matures the young and gives them confidence. It enables the elderly to stay young and active. Those in between gain a therapy to enjoy alongside work and family life. It is recommended!

• Andrew Harris (aeharris@live.co.uk) was an Air Cadet long ago. He admits to flying vintage gliders when they were new!



A Gliding Sequel

Andrew Harris concludes last month's feature

The lead picture (below) for our feature on gliding shows the drama of gliding amongst the clouds at the recent Open and 20 Metre Nationals. This was reproduced by kind permission of the magazine 'Sailplane & Gliding' and the photographer Steve Langford. We are pleased to acknowledge their help.

The gliding map below shows the locations for gliding in and near our region - and the areas where flying is restricted. This completes our guide to gliding which has been welcomed by the three gliding clubs which serve the north west.

