

# Your Gliding Journey

## Joining the Club

Prospective pilots are very welcome to visit the club on a flying day, or alternatively, arrange a trial flight through the booking organiser available on the website's contact page. The club is actively welcoming new members. You will need to complete a [membership form](#) and before solo flying, a [CAA Pilot Medical self-declaration](#).

## Training

Training flights are offered in one of the club's four two-seater gliders, led by a team of qualified BGA instructors. These sessions can be booked online, and there is no charge for instruction. Members are only responsible for the cost of the launch and the flying time. Each flying day is supported by a duty team including instructors, a tug pilot, winch drivers, and launch point controllers. All club members are expected to assist with moving gliders from the hangar and managing the launch point, which is considered an enjoyable aspect of club participation.

Training follows the BGA gliding syllabus and is tracked in both your personal logbook and your flying progress card.

## What Does Gliding Offer?

Through gliding, you will learn to safely operate the aircraft, handle unexpected situations, and utilise natural sources of rising air to keep the glider aloft. The sport is a continual process of learning, with each achievement leading to further goals.

There is no typical glider pilot; everyone finds their own satisfaction in the sport. Some prefer staying close to the airfield and enjoying thermals, while others pursue cross-country flights for a greater challenge and sense of achievement.

## How Do You Progress?

Once you have earned your Sailplane Pilots Licence, you become a qualified pilot and are able to self-brief. Initially, you will fly the club's single-seat gliders, but many members eventually purchase their own glider or join a syndicate with fellow club members. This offers flexibility in when and how long you can fly, with the possibility of remaining airborne for several hours.

Progress in gliding is recognised through the "Badge" system, which awards achievements for height gain, soaring time, and distance flown. While a first 50 Kilometre flight might seem ambitious at first, club members have achieved flights of over 750K on favourable days. Flights exceeding 300K are common. There is little in aviation that is more satisfying than flying around the countryside on a declared task, using thermals at speeds in excess of a car.

After a few years, many members choose to become instructors, which is a very fulfilling path, or obtain a powered licence to fly motorgliders or towplanes.

## How much does a glider cost?

Most club pilots privately owned aircraft cost perhaps £5-20,000. They tend to appreciate in value. Nowadays almost all new gliders come with engines that hugely reduce the likelihood of having to land in a farmer's field. They however are significantly more expensive.

## What time of the year can we fly?

All year, if the weather is good, but gliding is weather dependant and wet winters have made that time of year difficult. Typically, we can use thermals from March to October.

## What type of soaring conditions do we get?

We are fortunate to be on chalk downland which creates great thermal soaring. Typically, on a good day they will give climbs to 5000 feet or so, sometimes higher. We have a short local ridge which allows soaring in a SW wind. Very occasionally we experience mountain lee waves, but they are rare, although they have given us climbs to over 12,000 feet locally. Pilots visiting sites in Wales and Scotland regularly achieve 19,500 feet or more.

## What else is available?

We have a very active glider workshop, and many members enjoy working on and maintaining the club fleet.

Gliding clubs are a very sociable pastime, and we have frequent evening BBQs etc.

## What is a good time to start flying?

Any time. Gliding is one of the few sports where age is not a great barrier. Many start late in life, but there is no doubt that earlier is better.