

The first gliding club at Bristol, the Bristol and District Glider Club, was also known as the Wessex Gliding club. It was formed in October 1930\* by Norman Hall-Warren and a dozen or so others after an article about gliding had appeared in the Bristol Evening World. Mr A McLoughton of 14, Woodstock Road, Redland, Bristol was Club Secretary. The President was Lord Apsley and Vice President Mr R Wills. The entrance fee was £1-1-0 and the subscription was £2-2-0. They had around 35 members. The Bristol Evening World presented them with a Scud sailplane in 1931. This was first flown by Flying Officer E L Mole from a bungee launch from Wavering Down on the Mendips on 28 November. In a flat calm, he flew over Compton Bishop church and made a safe landing at the bottom.

Another keen member was Mr Bill Sykes (known as Psyche), the landlord of the New Passage Hotel at Pilning. He had experience as a test pilot for Whiteheads during the Great War and afterwards barnstorming with an Avro 504-K. He had a collection of components from a variety of aircraft, and constructed a primary glider using the wings of a 1914 Sopwith aircraft and the tail booms and empennage of an even earlier Caudron. This glider was perfectly balanced, flew well and suffered no structural failure during its career. The Club started its activities bungee launching the Sykes glider from a field adjacent to the hotel.

A two-day public display was organised at Wavering Down for the weekend of 30 April/ 1 May 1932. On the first day there was an aerobatic display by a group of six powered planes, and a number of hops by the Sykes glider. A guest pilot, L C Williams, the CFI of the London Gliding Club, was bungeed off in the Scud, and soared it for a while in the stiff breeze. Baynes, the Scud's designer, watched the flight and was delighted to see his aircraft soar. When he lost the lift, Mr Williams went for a landing in a field at the bottom. Unfortunately there were sheep in this field and in avoiding them he clipped a hedge and badly damaged the glider. On the Sunday, a replacement Scud had arrived over night, but the wind was not favourable for soaring. However the crowd were entertained by repeated hops in the Scud and Bill Sykes' glider.

After this, flying took place at Parnell's Yate aerodrome with the repaired Scud, using elastic cords and manpower. Fred Miles, later of Miles Aircraft, was one of the members. Very soon however, the short flights and the work involved in bungee launching on a flat site sapped enthusiasm and the Club petered out in a couple of years.

This club, which was not registered with the BGA, handed nothing on to any successor, except its President, and so cannot really be considered as a the start of the present club.

### References

- 1 Article by Keith Turner printed in the Bristol Evening Post on 4 December 1954. <Press Cuttings> 1954-12-04 Bristol Evening Post
- 2 Article by Keith Turner "The past and the Future" in the 1948 Bristol Gliding Club Manual page 28. <Bulletins> b 1948 Manual
- 3 Gliding and Motorless Flight. L.Howard-Flanders and C.F.Carr 1930 Appendix B Where to Glide.
- 4 Article "The Pilot who Crashed Picked Daisies" by Norman Hall-Warren in Bristol Evening World 3 April 1952. <Miscellaneous> 060
- 5 "Gliding 1931" Published by the Dorset Gliding Club - "Statistics of gliding clubs in the British Isles"
- 6 Flight 8 Aug. 1930 p 900 "Clubs in formation" <Press cuttings - Flight>

References Continued

- 7 Flight 21 Nov. 1930 p 1260 "British Gliding Clubs" <Press cuttings - Flight>
- 8 Contemporary Cuttings from the Bristol Evening World and Western Daily Press  
collected by Richard Cawsey. <Miscellaneous> 060

\* Note that refs. 1 and 4 give the date of formation as 1931, whereas refs. 6 and 7 report it in formation in August 1930, and formed in November that year.