

In 1937, Keith Turner and Michael Maufe, who had been founder members of the Cambridge University Gliding Club⁴, moved to Bristol to take up employment with the Bristol Aeroplane Company. With no gliding club in the area, they decided to set one up¹. Together with another Bristol Aeroplane Company Apprentice¹⁷ they set about looking for suitable sites to fly from. They hoped to find somewhere close to Bristol for initial training and possibly another site for soaring, preferably with potential for aerotowing⁴. This search involved much walking in the vicinity of likely hill sites in the Cotswolds, Mendips and the Malborough Downs¹². They also considered Whitchurch, the home of the Bristol and Wessex Aeroplane Club⁹.



Keith Turner in 1948

On 3rd June 1938, they held a public meeting at the Clifton Down Hotel in Bristol, under the Chairmanship of Captain F S Barnwell, OBE, the chief designer of the Bristol Aeroplane Company¹⁴. At this meeting Miss Naome Heron-Maxwell, who was a prominent glider pilot of the time, was a guest speaker. At the meeting it was agreed to go ahead with the formation of the Club, and Keith Turner became Acting Hon Secretary. It was also agreed to hold a further meeting to agree rules for the new Club⁴. Among the potential members were seven members of other gliding clubs, including two former club secretaries²⁸.

Towards the end of July they held a second meeting at the same hotel under the Chairmanship of Mr R Ashley Hall, President of the predecessor club,

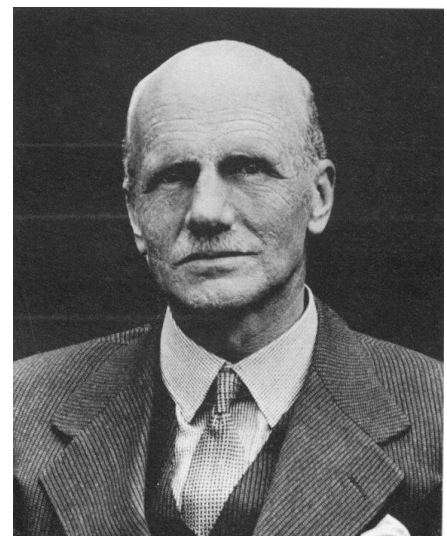


Richard Cocke in 1951

who was prominent in aviation and a director of a Bristol paint manufacturing company¹⁸. A gliding film was shown⁷ and a talk was given by Mr Hugh C Bergel, of the London Gliding Club, who was one of the leading glider pilots in the pre-war period and later a senior ATA pilot during the war²⁴. It was reported that the Club had acquired a primary trainer as well as a Grunau and was intending to start flying on the next weekend at Leighterton, at an inclusive charge of 3/- a day^{5&8}. (though in fact the primary was not registered until October²⁷ and the first flight at Leighterton was **not until** November)³.

The Club was formally registered as the Bristol Gliding Club Proprietary Ltd on 26 September 1938 (Co Number 344632) with an authorised capital of 100 £1 shares (three being issued)^{20,21&22}. The club had Lord Apsley as President and Captain Barnwell and Mr Ashley Hall as vice presidents¹. (Though Captain Barnwell was killed test flying an aircraft of his own design on 2nd August 1938¹⁴) Keith Turner was Secretary and instructor, Michael Maufe Ground engineer, and Richard Cocke Treasurer and these three were directors of the limited company holding 1 share each¹. The Club was a member of the BGA¹³.

On the 5th September an agreement was signed with Mr Kenneth Harper, the owner of Leighterton airfield and the Airport Garage and Cafe to permit the Club to use the field for gliding at an annual fee of £5 payable quarterly²¹.



Captain Barnwell

Leighterton was a grass field about 23 miles from Bristol, on the east side of the A46 and about 7 miles south of Stroud. It had been set up as a military airfield and used by the Australian Flying Corps for training in 1918. Following the end of the Great War, it was reduced in size, with most of its buildings dismantled. The remainder, an L shaped field of 145 acres, about a mile from the edge of a steep valley, started to be operated as a private strip by the then owner of the Airport Garage, Mr J E Herbert. It was used for "society people", including Lord Apsley, visiting local country houses. However it had changed hands by the time the Club operated there. It had runs, north south of about 1800ft and east west of

2700ft¹⁵. In 1948, Keith described it as being "poor by modern standards, but the best that could be obtained at the time"¹. The members used the cafe for a club house²³.

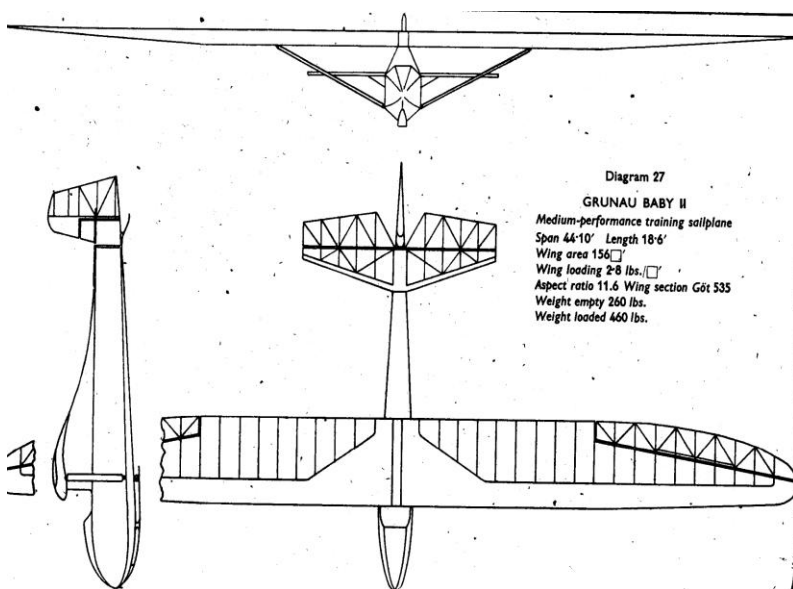
At the time gliders cost between £100 and £200, and the Club had obtained a Nacelle Dagling BGA 373²⁷ built by Slingsby, and had the use of the unbraked Grunau Baby II BGA 329 which Keith Turner had bought in March that year²⁷. The Club operated it in partnership with the syndicate of Keith and Tony Deane-Drummond^{1,5&26}. The accounts for the first year, together with amendments to take them to the end of the following January indicate that these purchases were financed in part by a Grant subsidy administered through the BGA²⁰. (See Appendix). However the Grunau had been obtained before the first meeting and Keith Turner had flown it at the National Competition at Dunstable in July^{5&9}. Michael Maufe flew in the same Competition representing the Cambridge University Gliding Club, and completed his Silver "C" there¹⁰.



Leighterton © English Heritage



Location © Ordnance Survey

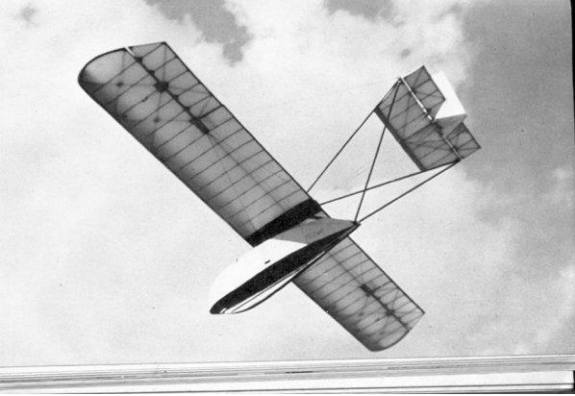


Grunau Baby II Drawing

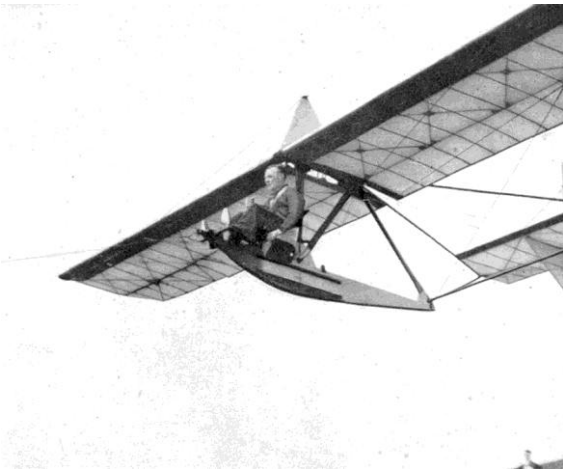
The first flying by the founder members as members of the Bristol Club, apart from Keith's flying in the competition, was at Roundway near Devizes in October 1938 when several hours of soaring were done from bungee launches^{1&11}. Flying started at Leighterton on Saturday 26 November when Michael Maufe had a car-bungee hop in the Dagling and a pupil, Warry, had two "car trundles" behind the Club's 20 HP Essex Super 6, which had cost £7³.

Training launching was by bungee with various lengths of rope behind the car, and using rope alone for Grunau circuits. Most launch heights seem to have been around 500 to

600 feet, though one of 850 feet was noted. There was one note of finding a thermal^{3,11&17}.



A Nacelle Dagling



An Open Dagling

Altogether there were 24 days of flying at Leighterton before the second world war stopped gliding. A number of certificates were gained; 4 "As" and a "B" were recorded. There was a certain amount of crashery, one crash that put the Grunau out of action for 2½ months, and on the 2nd April 1939 the Nacelle Dagling was written off in an accident in which Peter Grear spun in from a winch launch to 90 feet. Sadly he died in hospital during surgery to clean a compound fracture²⁹. The Dagling and was replaced with an Open Dagling³ BGA 402²⁷. In addition to the flying at Leighterton, the Grunau was flown at Roundway, Huish, Inkpen and Beacon Hill in April 1939, at Dunstable in June and July, and at the BGA contests at Derby and Lancs later in July and at Dunstable and Beacon Hill again in August^{11&25}. At the end the membership stood at around 30 or 40^{2&21}.

The last recorded flight at Leighterton was on 23 July 1939³. With war inevitable, operations stopped. The Club's equipment was sold¹ and the Grunau was put into storage until 1944 when it also was sold²⁶. Michael Maufe and Keith Turner both joined the RAF. However, Keith was employed in the Performance Department at Bristols for a time in 1940, sitting near Lyn McFarlane, and Keith passed his enthusiasm for gliding on to Lyn, who was to become one of the people who reformed the club after the war¹³.

Unhappily, the Club's president, Lord Apsley did not survive the war¹.

The following are names of members mentioned on the daily flying summaries³:

Keith Turner	Michael Maufe	Richard Cocke	A J Deane-Drummond
Allen	E P Furlong	Larkin	J S Sproule
Blount	Peter Grear	MacLucas	W V Warry
Miss Murry-Brown	Holt	Sylvia Mapson	
	Also Rev K Batchelor (see ref 21)		

Visitors Wigg and Hebden also flew

Appendix to Section 2

Analysis of Accounts (Ref 20)

Since the Club came into existence sometime about the middle of June 1938, and the only available accounts for the pre-war operations are from the date of its registration, 29 September 1938, to 29 September 1939, it is possible that these accounts also cover income and expenditure incurred before their nominal start date. They also cover the period beyond the end of flying, and so in reality may cover the whole of the pre-war operation. Pencil amendments to the accounts update them up to 31 January 1940, and the only change involved is that a "BGA Subsidy Grant" had been refunded.

The following are some significant deductions which may be drawn from the figures given.

The subscriptions totalled £49-7-0, which is 47 guineas. This suggests that there were 47 paid up members and the subscription was 1 guinea. Alternatively, if there had been only 30 members as Keith Turner remembered, and the subscription was 1½ guineas, that would have left 2 guineas unaccounted which could perhaps have been daily memberships from visiting pilots.

Flying fees totalled £9-10-4, which averages just over 5d a flight for the 440 flights recorded at Leighterton. However, there may well have been different charges for slides and circuits and there could have been a charge for airborne time. In addition there may have been charges for the use of the Grunau at other sites.

An Item for "Petrol and Storage" (£26-18-10) indicates that there was some kind of a building available to the Club at Leighterton.

The "Cost of glider crashed", must refer to the Nacelle Dagling. This was £21 before the subsidy grant was refunded and £70 after. This suggests that the subsidy was 70%, leaving the Club to pay 30%. The total subsidy repayment of £227-13-6 corresponds to a total glider price of £325-5-0. Subtracting the £70 for the Dagling leaves £255-5-0. "Machines, Motor car and Equipment" totalled with depreciation came to £256-5-0, near enough the same, so it appears that the subsidy covered everything down to tow car and Bungee. Given that the replacement (open) Dagling must have cost around the same as the original, and the tow car cost £7, the price of the Grunau would have been around £180. (However, Tony Deane-Drummond stated that the Grunau originally cost £100 and was sold for £150 - August 2006)

Since the Club made an operating loss over its active life, the fact that it had some £70 to hand over to its successors after the war suggests that Richard Cocke must have done very well when he sold the Club's assets at the start of the war. (Ref 16)

These prices should be compared with the average gross weekly wage of £3-9-6d for an adult manual worker in 1938 and about 35% more than that for non-manual workers.

Section 2 References

Item	Folder and file	
1	The Past and the Future - Keith Turner Club Annual 1948 pp 28-31	<Bulletins> b Annual 1948
2	Article in Bristol Evening Post Keith Turner 4 Dec.1955	<Press Cuttings> 1954-12-04 Bristol Evening post
3	Daily Flying Summaries at Leighterton	<Min2> 2-L1 to 2-L14
4	Sailplane Club for Bristol Bristol Evening World 30 June 1938	<Lyn McFarlane> Image 1718
5	Bristol to have Club for Gliding Bristol Evening Post 21 July 1938	<Lyn McFarlane> Image 1719
6	Bristol Man Comes to Grief	<Press Cuttings Album> IMG 1627
7	Photo of Public Meeting June '38	Ditto IMG 1628
8	Bristol Glider Plans	Ditto IMG 1629
9	Bristolian helping to make gliding popular	Ditto IMG 1630
10	Qualified for Gliding Silver C	Ditto IMG 1631
11	Page of Michael Maufe's log book	Ditto IMG 1632
12	Verbal informaion from Michael Maufe	
13	Early Days of the Bristol Gliding Club By David Farrar and Lyn McFarlane	<Miscellaneous> 056
14	Bristol Aircraft - A Pictorial History of British Achievement by Robert Wall. Halsgrove 2000. page 88	
15	Leighterton Aifield	<Miscellaneous> 007
16	Organising Committee meeting 14 Nov 1945	<Min1> 1-3 to 1-8
17	Gliding and Soaring in the Early Days Vintage Glider Club News Autumn 1996	<Miscellaneous> 096
18	Letter to Mr Ashley Hall from John Cochrane 10 June 1955 and reply from Mr Ashley Hall 14 June 1955	<Nympsfield Purchase File> n129 & n135
19	Maps of Leighterton airfield circa 1924 (Gloucestershire Records Office)	
20	Accounts for 29 Sept 1938 to 29 Sept 1939/	<BGC Company Docs> c1 5
21	Article "Gliding and Bristol" - Mike Harper	<Bulletins> b-Nov/Dec 1969
22	Application for Company Registration	<BGC Company Docs> c1 2
23	Mike Harper's recollections of his conversation with Rev Batchelor	<Miscellaneous> 070
24	Information from Walter Kahn in 2006	
25	Tony Deane-Drummond's log book	<Miscellaneous> 069
26	Information from Tony Deane-Drummond	<Miscellaneous> 072
27	BGA Registration information provided by Phil Butler in June 2009	
28	The Sailplane June 1938	<Press cuttings> 1938-06
29	The Sailplane June 1939	<Press cuttings> 1939-06