

Section 3 The Restart after the War

After the end of the war in 1945, all that remained of the pre-war club was one Vice President: Wing Commander Ashley-Hall, three directors: Richard Cocke, Keith Turner and Michael Maufe - the last two still in the Air Force, recognition of the Club by Companies' House and the BGA, and a sum of around £75³ salted away by the Treasurer, Richard Cocke^{1,2}. However, there were no aircraft, no site, no launching equipment, only one previous member locally and no instructors or indeed anyone with previous gliding experience⁴. In addition, petrol and food were still rationed.



The driving force for reforming the Club was Maurice Chantrill with support from Lyn McFarlane and David Farrar. These three were all aeronautical engineers working for the Bristol Aeroplane Company and had a keen interest in gliding. Lyn had worked in the Aerodynamics Department with Keith Turner during the early part of the war and he and David had flown model gliders together during the war when full scale gliding was not permitted⁴.

Maurice Chantrill with Tommy Thompson



David Farrar

Maurice called a meeting at the Greyhound Hotel, Bristol on 25 June 1945. This was attended by a small number of interested people, mostly from the BAC⁴. At this meeting an organising committee was elected, consisting of:

Treasurer: Richard Cocke who agreed to serve until the reforming process was completed.

Secretary: Maurice Chantrill

Committee members: J Kukucki, Lyn G McFarlane, and Peter G Mobsby.⁵

However, it should be noted that the Organising Committee freely co-opted members from time to time whenever it seemed expedient to do so⁶. See Appendix 1 for the full list. Notable among these

additional members was T Rex Young who was co-opted in January 1946 and was elected Chairman of the Committee in February 1946⁷. Rex was rather older than other committee members, and as well as having some gliding experience was a business man, and it was largely thanks to his wise oversight that the Club was able to reach a sound financial position⁴.



Lyn McFarlane



Rex Young

At this first meeting, the following points were identified as needing attention:⁵

- 1) Investigation of the credit balance of the pre-war Club.
- 2) Contacting the absent directors (Maufe and Turner) This was necessary so as to be able to transfer the assets and status of the old Club to the new organisation.
- 3) Investigating the status of the registration of the Club with the authorities and the BGA.
- 4) Prospecting for possible sites for training and soaring, and the availability and prices of gliders.
- 5) Arrangements for inaugural meeting.

It was quickly established that the Club was still recognised by the authorities and the BGA, and Richard Cocke was able to define the Club's bank balance - £116 less around £40 owing to Keith Turner⁴. He also quickly made contact with Mike Maufe and obtain his resignation as director (1 August 1945)²⁴. However, contacting Keith Turner proved more difficult as he was still in the Air Force in India¹⁷, and it was not until 4 July 1946 that Richard reported that Keith's resignation (dated 2 Feb 46)²⁵ as director had been obtained and Richard was able to resign as Treasurer and Director. David Farrar was appointed Treasurer, and he, Rex Young and Mr J Kuckchi were appointed directors.⁹

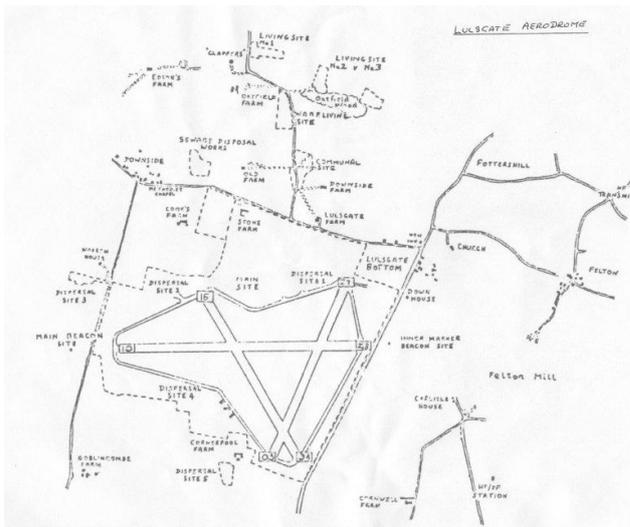
During this time, Maurice Chantrill had discovered that the Air Training Corps at Charmy Down was looking for volunteers to train as ATC instructors. S/L Phillips, the Group Gliding Officer and Charles Ryall, an ATC instructor agreed to take on Maurice, David Farrar and Lyn McFarlane in spite of knowing that they were setting up a civilian club. The air cadets were trained mostly by the solo method using Kirby Cadets towed by ex barrage balloon winches, and retrieved using Beaverettes, (light armoured vehicles designed for airfield defence). The cadets had priority for gliding, and initially the trainee instructors were mainly involved in winching and retrieving. But they started to get airborne in January 1946. In addition to slides and hops in the Cadet, they were fortunate to get a limited amount of dual instruction in a Falcon 3, but less than an hour each. By the middle of the year they had each reached "B" Certificate standard, at that time being able to demonstrate the ability to turn, and also qualified as instructors to "B" standard. All three continued to instruct with the ATC until the middle of 1947.¹⁰



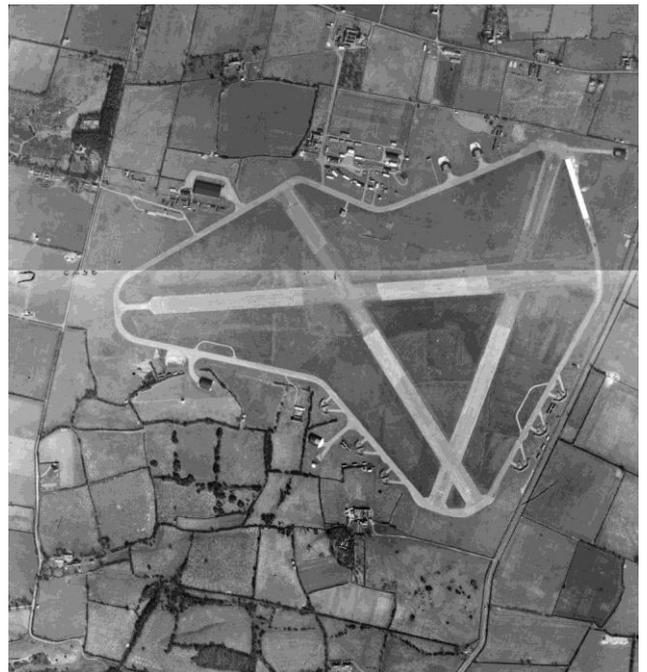
S/L Phillips

The organising committee also started to look for suitable sites. (In connection with the choice of sites, it was generally considered at the time that with initial training being carried out solo with ground slides and hops, the only way to get worthwhile time in the air for more advanced training was through hill soaring. This perceived requirement for a hill site persisted even after the introduction of two-seat training, and influenced the much later decision to move to Nympsfield) Among others, Ft/Lt Jennings was very active in the search, testing various hills for their soaring potential by using his powered aeroplane with its engine throttled back or stopped.¹¹

By April 1946, he had obtained verbal permission for the Club to use Lulsgate Bottom, a disused RAF airfield, about 7 miles from Bristol, subject to written permission from higher authority.¹² However, by 28 May, the reply from the Air Ministry denied permission, with a refusal to consider any further approaches. The Committee decided to pursue the matter through an MP.¹³ It is not recorded in the minutes whether this avenue was successful, but permission was obtained soon after and rent was paid on some buildings from 24 August 1946. The landlord then was the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and it is possible that a change of owning Ministry may have been a cause of the change of the decision.¹⁴ Other sites under consideration at the same time were Charmy Down A/F, Babdown Farm A/F, Priddy, Whitchurch A/F, Huish, Burton A/F,¹³ Milton, Draycott (Halesland)¹⁵ and Stinchcombe (suggested by Philip Wills)³⁷ A start was made at Halesland to clear the field of rocks but the site was taken over by the ATC.³⁷ Even after the use of Lulsgate had been confirmed, the Club was still interested in obtaining the use of a hill soaring site.²⁸



**Location of Lulsgate
and
Aerial View © English Heritage**



The BGA, which had access to a quantity of redundant Government equipment such as barrage balloon winches and cable, and Beaverettes, asked what facilities the new Club might need, and in response a meeting of the Organising Committee on the 25 Jan 1946 came up with a wish list of gliders: 1 two-seater, 1 secondary, and a sailplane. However it was appreciated that there was no hope of achieving this without financial assistance, as the current funds would not stretch to more than a Dagling.¹⁸

A tentative budget was drawn up which suggested that a subscription of 4 guineas, entrance fee 1 guinea and a launch fee of 2/6 would be viable with 50 members, and a questionnaire sent out to interested people confirmed for the 18 April 1946 meeting that this level of subscription would be acceptable.¹⁹ On the strength of that it was decided to order a Kirby Cadet on hire purchase and put in a claim for a "liberated" German Grunau through the BGA. (At the end of the war German aircraft were ordered to be destroyed by the allied forces, but two Grunaus were saved and given to the BGA.³⁷) It was also decided to call an Inaugural General meeting in May and to hold a dance in October to raise funds.²⁰

The Inaugural General Meeting was held at the Grand Hotel, Broad Street, Bristol on 22 May 1946. It was chaired by Sir Egbert Cadbury, who had been invited to become President of the Club. It was agreed that there should be three grades of Membership: Associate (non-flying), Gliding (up to B Certificate standard) and Soaring (with B Certificate). The subscriptions to be 1 guinea for Associates and Gliding members, and 4 guineas with a 1 guinea entrance fee for Soaring members. In addition, Gliding members would be required to deposit 10 guineas, part of which would be refunded on achieving their B Certificate. The launch fee was to be 1/6 and soaring 3d per minute after the first 2 minutes. Those joining before the end of May would be founder members and excused the entrance fee. The Organising Committee was asked to stay in place until a further general meeting to be held in September.²¹ About 60 members enrolled at the meeting.²² The records currently available do not say how much money was raised at the meeting, but if half the members were Gliding members, it would have been around £450. This compares with the price of £266 for a new Cadet²⁹. A sum of £25 was also donated by the president.²³



**Pears Winch with Joe Lance, "Bonzo" Hinton
and R M McDougal**



**Pears winch on its mobile carriage
with Eric Smith**

Over the next few months the Committee investigated the purchase of various other gliders: Kranich, Pruffling, a Baynes glider,¹⁵ a Wilkinson and a Kite²⁸ without going ahead with any. However the ex-German Grunau was allocated to the club by the BGA. This required a thorough overhaul, which was probably undertaken by Marshalls of Cambridge. Two ex-Government barrage balloon winches and two Beaverettes were also ordered through the BGA. As the balloon winches required extensive modification before they could be used for glider launching it was decided to hire a winch from Roger Pears to cover the modification period.^{15,29,30,31} Beaverettes were small armoured vehicles fitted with Standard 17 engines and three speed non-synchromesh gear boxes³⁶. They had forward facing seats for the driver and his mate, and cross facing bench seats behind. In versions cut down to waist level, they were used by many clubs during the early post war years, and the body work being made of quarter inch steel, it was reasonably member-proof.

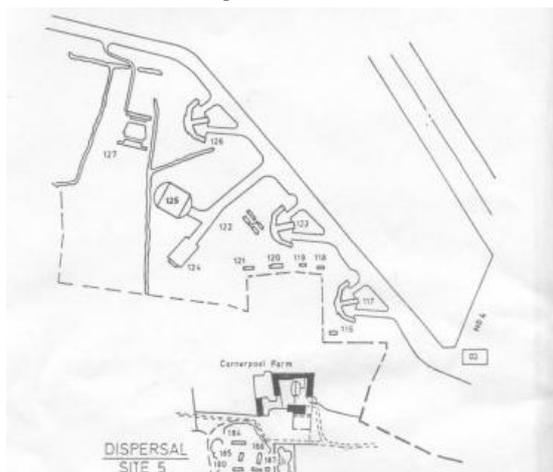
A Committee meeting on 30 July turned its attention to flying operations. A flying Committee was set up, with Rex Young as CFI, and Tommy Thompson as Secretary. Desmond (Tiny) Rendell was appointed Chief Ground Engineer, and Lyn McFarlane became responsible for Aircraft and Equipment spares.³⁴ By September a set of flying rules had been formulated.²⁸

Permission to use Lulsgate was finally confirmed shortly before the Red Cadet, BGA 445, was delivered in September.³¹ An overcast Tuesday evening, the 10th September 1946, saw the first Club aircraft movement, when the Cadet was given a ground slide behind the beaverette, and flying training began in earnest on the following Saturday.³

Lulsgate Bottom was a disused RAF airfield situated alongside the A38 about 7 miles from Bristol and on a main bus route. It was an almost flat field, about 600ft above sea level, with the usual three runways at around 60 degrees to one another, bounded by a perimeter track; all these surfaces being tarmac surfaced. The east-west runway was then 1400 yards long, and the other two considerably shorter.³³ All the grass areas were landable, but a wire fence extended round outside of the peri-track, well inside the airfield boundary.⁸ Use of the grass areas was restricted during the summer so that a hay crop could be grown.³⁶



Red Cadet BGA 445



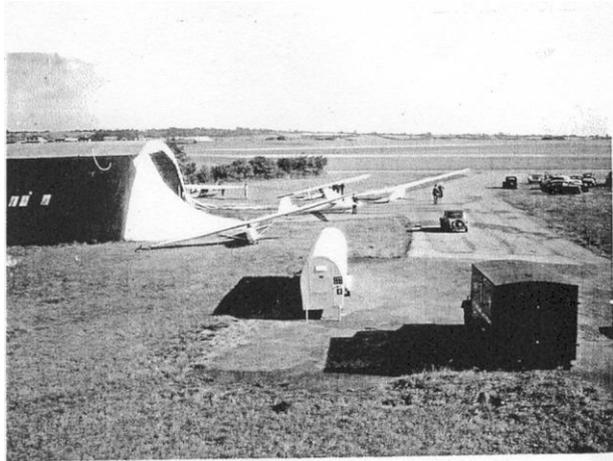
Dispersal Site 5



Club's Blister Hangar and H block of Nissen Huts

Initially the Club had the use of two buildings, Nos 164 and 165 which they occupied from 24 August 1946 to the end of November. It then took over a blister hangar; building 125, a cluster of four Nissen huts; building 122; and a toilet hut, 119; all on a dispersal to the south of the airfield for a total rent of £26 pa.¹⁴ The blister hangar was a "double over extra" model to Drawing 12532/41. It had a roof span in the form of a shallow circular arc, about a 61 deg segment. The front and rear were closed with canvas curtains and the floor area was 69 by 90 feet, though with vanishing headroom at the sides. The maximum height was 20'4".²⁶ The Nissen huts were 16 ft models to Drawing 13214/41 of just over semi-circular cross section and 16 ft diameter. Three were 36 feet long and the other one 48ft. They were disposed as the parallel arms of an "H" block, joined with a brick corridor.^{27,33}

So at this stage, from a standing start some fifteen months earlier, the Club had acquired an influential President, a strong committee, a membership of some 60 people, a fine site, an aircraft, a tow car, a winch, six instructors, an embryonic training regime and about £200 cash in hand.³⁵



Hangar and Apron



Nissen Huts: Workshop on left, Clubhouse on right

Page Three

The Kirby Cadet The original Kirby Cadet was designed to meet the demand for a robust club type training machine to fill the gap between the Nacelle Primary and the intermediate Sailplane.

The aim was to construct a machine of low cost and of the utmost simplicity, so that repairs and replacements could be carried out by semi-skilled club members with limited workshop facilities.

A two-spar wing with diagonal stiffeners and braced by faired tubular steel wing struts was chosen as the easiest form of construction. The fuselage and tail units also were designed for robust simplicity rather than appearance.

Because of its high lift at low speeds and gentle stalling characteristics, as well as its suitability for two-spar construction, Aerofoil Section Gott. 426 was selected as the most suitable for this particular type.

During the last few years this machine has been in extensive use by the Air Training Corps and has been progressively modified and improved. As a result the 1946 Kirby Cadet, with its wing loading of 2.8 lbs. per sq. foot and aspect ratio of 8.5, is highly satisfactory for instruction in circuits and soaring. For those who prefer this type of *ab initio* training this machine is without equal. Gliding Angle, 1 in 16; Sinking Speed at 32 m.p.h., 3.5 f.p.s.

Price £295

KIRBY CADET

DESIGNED BY
SLINGSBY SAILPLANES LTD.
MANUFACTURED BY
MARTIN HEARN LTD
HOOTON PARK, CHESHIRE ENGLAND

WING AREA 170 sq ft (15.8 m²)
ASPECT RATIO 8.5
TAKE-OFF WEIGHT 297 lb (135 kg)
WING LOADING 2.8 lb/sq ft (138 kg/m²)

WING SPAN: 38' 5" (11734)
WING CHORD: 4' 6" (1380)
WING AREA: 170 sq ft (15.8 m²)
WING LOADING: 2.8 lb/sq ft (138 kg/m²)

Kirby Cadet Brochure

Section 3 Appendix 1

List of people who served on the Organising Committee

Richard Cocke (Treasurer of the prewar Club and during the handover to the new membership)

Maurice Chantrill (Secretary and Instigator of the restart of the Club)

David Farrar (Co-instigator of the restart and Treasurer after the handover to the re-started Club)

Graham Ferrier

"Bonzo" Hinton

Ft/Lt Jennings

J Kukucki

Lyn MacFarlane (Co-instigator of the restart)

R M McDougal

Peter G Mobsby

S/L A H Phillips (ATC Group Gliding Officer)

"Tiny" Desmond Rendell (Ground Engineer)

Charles Ryall (Air Training Corps instructor who arranged for gliding instruction for committee members at Charmy Down)

Ron F Tayler

Edwin Allen "Tommy" Thompson (Secretary of Flying Committee)

Keith Turner (Founder of the pre-war Club)

T Rex Young (Chairman)

References in Section 3

1 The Past and the Future - an article by Keith Turner in the 1948 Club Annual pages 28 to 32.	<Bulletins> b Annual 1948
2 Verbal information from Mike Maufe	
3 Committee minutes 14 Nov 1945	<Min1> 1-4
4 Early Days of the Bristol Gliding Club A booklet by Lyn McFarlane and David Farrar	<Miscellaneous> 056 page 6
5 Committee minutes 25 June 1945	<Min1> 1-1 to 1-3
6 Meeting minutes up to 1st AGM	<Min1> 1-1 to 1-70
7 Minutes of meeting 19 Feb 1946	<Min1> 1-12 & 1-13
8 Recollections of flying at Lulsgate 1946 -1956	<Miscellaneous> 019 page 1
9 Minutes of meeting 4 July 1946	<Min1> 1-34
10 Early Days of the Bristol Gliding Club	<Miscellaneous> 056 pp 7 & 8
11 Letter from Lyn Mcfarlane to Ken Brown in	<Misc text> 10 Oct 2003
12 Minutes of Meeting 18 April 1946	<Min1> 1-19 & 1-20
13 Minutes of meeting 28 May 1946	<Min1> 1-29
14 Minutes of meeting 2 September 1949	<Min1> 1-238
15 Minutes of meeting 4 July 1946	<Min1> 1-35
16 Minutes of meeting 14 July 1947	<Min1> 1-82
17 Early Days of the Bristol Gliding Club	<Miscellaneous> 056 page 14
18 Minutes of meeting 25 Jan 1946	<Min1> 1-10 & 1-11
19 Minutes of meeting 19 March 1946	<Min1> 1-16 & 1-17
20 Minutes of meeting 18 April 1946	<Min1> 1-20 & 1-21
21 Minutes of Inaugural Meeting 22 May 1946	<Min1> 1-25 to 1-27
22 The Bristol Gliding Club - Rex Young In initial issue of Gliding	<Miscellaneous> 094
23 Minutes of meeting 28 May 1946	<Min1> 1-28
24 Mike Maufe's letter of resignation	<BGC Company Doc> c1 11
25 Keith Turner's letter of resignation	<BGC Company Doc> c1 18

References (cont)

26 British Military Airfields Architecture	<Miscellaneous> 5
27 British Military Airfields Architecture	<Miscellaneous> 6
28 Minutes of Flying Committee meeting 3 Sept 1946	<Min 1> 1-40 to 1-43
29 Accounts for year to 31 Dec 1947	<BGC Company Doc> c1 31
30 Recollections of flying at Lulsgate 1946 -1956	<Miscellaneous> 019 page 5
31 Recollections of flying at Lulsgate 1946 -1956	<Miscellaneous> 019 page 6
32 Early Days	<Miscellaneous> 056 page 10
33 Plan of Lulsgate	<Miscellaneous> 098
33 Plan of Lulsgate dispersal & tabulation of buildings.	<Miscellaneous> 098
34 Minutes of meeting 30 July 1946	<Min 1> 1-37 to 1-39
35 Minutes of General Meeting 7 Oct 1946	<Min 1> 1-47 to 1-50
36 Early operations at Lulsgate - Ron Tayler 2005	<Miscellaneous> 40
37 Letter from Lyn McFarlane - June 2005	<Miscellaneous) 41