

GLIDEABILITY



At The Ulster Gliding Club, Bellarena.

From the Chairman



I am delighted to announce that The Ulster Gliding Club has purchased a new two-seat dual-control training glider that is fully equipped with hand-controls in addition to the regular controls. This will allow people who have a disability of the lower limbs to have full access to the flying training programme.

The development was made possible through generous support from the Sport N.I. Lottery Fund and The Enkalon Foundation.

We welcome and encourage people with disabilities to participate and we offer full membership of the club on a 'mainstream' basis.

J. Nethercott



NEW FACILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



On Tuesday 26th June 2007, The Ulster Gliding Club introduced a new high-performance two-seat training glider to further develop the facilities available at Bellarena. The new glider is fitted with special hand controls that make it suitable for flying by the able-bodied and by those with disabilities of the lower limbs. Acquisition of the new glider was made possible with the generous help of grant aid from The Sport Northern Ireland Lottery Fund and The Enkalon Foundation. Professor Saunders O.B.E., Chairman of Sport Northern Ireland, introduced the facility by officially handing over the glider.

Professor Saunders has remarked "Sport Northern Ireland is committed to improving the programmes and facilities available for people of all abilities to participate in sport in Northern Ireland. Funding towards the new glider will further improve the Ulster Gliding Club's facilities for all users. The inclusion of hand-controls and support equipment will provide full equality of access to flying training for wheelchair users for the first time in Northern Ireland. The new glider has a service life of at least 30 years and this will enable a generation of wheelchair users to have access to the sport at Bellarena. Sport is an excellent vehicle for the social development of people with disabilities. It provides opportunities to be active, to interact with others, to boost self-esteem and to build new friendships."

On launch day the Ulster Gliding Club introduced a number of persons with a disability to the unique experience of flying a glider in the scenic skies around Lough Foyle. Promotion of the new opportunity will be assisted by Disability Sport Northern Ireland.

FEEDBACK

Comments recorded by people with disabilities who have sampled gliding at Bellarena.

"It was magic."

"A very positive experience."

"Instructors are very patient and explain everything to you. Nothing is too much for them to help you. The group I was with, all had different disabilities."

"The staff were helpful, understanding and patient."

"Great day, everyone very friendly."

"It made me feel I could do anything"

"Exhilarating, unbelievable"

"Out of this world!
Fantastic!"

HELP WITH BOARDING



An electrically operated hoist is available to assist with entry and exit for wheelchair users and for those with mobility problems. Please note that the design of the two-seat gliders allows a maximum weight of 103 kg or 227 lbs or 16 stone (approx) per occupant. Young people are welcome however they must be physically large enough to be able to reach the controls of the glider in order to benefit from a lesson.

The club has a new launch-point control hut and shelter specially equipped to permit easy access by wheelchair users and by those with mobility problems.

TOWING UP

SOARING OVER THE BEACH



The instructor's view from the rear seat during the aerotow launch to at least 2,000 feet altitude. All training gliders are fully enclosed and are fitted with full dual controls.



STEVE DERWIN IS AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL



From The Chief Flying Instructor



The specially adapted glider is fitted with hand controls in addition to the the foot operated rudder pedals. Persons with a disability affecting the lower limbs will have the same control over the glider as able-bodied participants. Our experience is that hand control users progress at the same rate and achieve the same skill level as other participants.

With thanks to Geoff Hill of The Newsletter.

Steve Derwin is an inspiration to us all. He is a qualified disabled gliding instructor and was at Bellarena to unveil the new high-performance training glider fitted with special hand controls so that it can be flown by anyone who's lost the use of their lower limbs. Mind you, if you'd suggested to Steve back in 1989 that this was where he was going to end up, he would have laughed at you.

Back then, he was a mountaineering and canoeing instructor, as fit as a whole orchestra full of fiddles and a keen biker in his spare time; until one day that year, his life changed forever in an instant. Gunning his powerful Yamaha FJ1200 down an unfamiliar road, he roared over the brow of a hill and found himself facing an unmarked roundabout. He braked, but it was too late, and seconds later he lay in the road with a broken spine at exactly the same spot that a lorry had crashed the week before and a biker had died three weeks earlier.

The accident was to leave him in a wheelchair to this day. "It was one of those moments where everything changes," said the 57-year-old Yorkshireman - at Bellarena, the glorious meadow by the sea which is the home of the Ulster Gliding Club. "You spend months in hospital thinking that your life is over, but then you discover something else. I'd always loved mountaineering, and once when I was climbing in the Andes, I saw these guys paragliding off a mountain it took me hours to climb down".

"Well, the accident was my chance to try that, so I took up hang-gliding and then learnt to fly a microlight. When someone suggested gliding. I thought it would be a bit sedate, until I discovered they were fully aerobatic. It changed my life.

I got my licence, then my instructor's rating last year. Since then, teaching someone with, say, spinal injuries, to fly is so rewarding I can't describe it".

"Not only that, but I've got my bike licence back. I read last year about a paraplegic who'd adapted a Fireblade with safety wheels at the back which keep the bike upright when you stop. Mind you, I don't think my missus would approve," he said as Professor Eric Saunders, the chairman of Sport Northern Ireland, stepped over to officially hand over the £85,000 glider, which was bought with help from the Lottery and the Enkalon Foundation.

The Professor remarked "I'm delighted with this. It's going to enable a whole range of people who've never had a chance to enjoy the experience of taking to the skies; although I say enjoy provisionally, since I'm about to go up for a flight myself," he said before cutting a ribbon attached to the nose of the glider, setting free a large helium-filled teddy bear which then drifted up to the roof of the hangar, where it will probably remain for the expected 30-year lifespan of the glider.

Duly strapped in and taken for a spin with Steve, the Prof returned to earth an hour later with the smile of most people who've been up in a glider for the first time. "Magical. Especially when you're in the hands of an expert," he said.

The last word, however, must go to 10-year-old Daniel, who's been in a wheelchair with cerebral palsy since he was two and who was Steve's next passenger. "Brilliant," he said the moment they landed. "I want to be a pilot."

In that regard, he was much like any small boy. The only difference is that thanks to men like Steve Derwin, now he can.

Once you have tasted flight, you will walk the earth with your eyes turned forever skyward, for there you have been, and there you long to return. - *Leonardo Da Vinci.*

Do you know what is Northern Ireland's best kept secret? The answer has to be The Ulster Gliding Club. Located on the edge of Lough Foyle, the Ulster Gliding Club is the only facility of its kind in N.I. and has been operated by its members as a voluntary sports club for over 77 years. We are a member club of The British Gliding Association who are responsible for training and approving all of our instructors.

Did you know that not all pilots fly aircraft with engines? We offer the chance to be a pilot with a difference. Learn to fly in a glider, there's no engine and a minimum of knobs and switches. It's knowing where you want to go but asking yourself "how the heck am I going to get there?", using only the currents of air to help you. Just imagine, you're flying with the sun as your engine, quiet, peaceful and pure serenity.

Learning to fly a glider will present you with two challenges. The first is the fun of learning how to fly an aircraft and the second is learning how to read the sky in order that you can prolong the length of time you stay airborne. Training flights in our two-seat dual-control gliders usually last between 25 and 50 minutes, flying over Binevenagh mountain and Benone Strand.

When suitably trained, you can fly solo from the age of sixteen. Your first solo will be a big milestone but then you'll want to stay up longer, go a little higher and eventually go a lot further away from your home airfield. Maybe you'll even want to fly in competitions, or become an instructor.

Gliding is more than just turning up at your local airfield, it's about meeting new people and learning new skills but most of all it's about having fun that won't cost you the earth. Gliding can be a sport or a hobby – it's your choice. But one thing for sure is that when you are at 6,000 feet above the Sperrin mountains with only the gentle sound of the air flowing over the glider, there's no other feeling like it. You really are as free as a bird.

When you were little and someone asked you, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" did you say fireman, did you say nurse or did you say pilot? The next time you look up at the sky and see a glider, just think "that could be me!".

Mary says 'gliders are girls toys too'.



Gliding can be enjoyed as a pastime or as a sport by girls, on exactly the same basis and to the same level of competence as for boys, indeed the U.K. National Gliding Championship was won by Sally King in recent years. The club has female pupils and has female pilots flying solo at present and welcomes other females, with or without disabilities, who may wish to join.

(Girls are advised to wear trousers when having a gliding lesson.)

Options for participation by people with disabilities.

Through mainstream membership, by attending on Saturday or Sunday. Membership is open and new members, with or without disabilities, are made welcome. Contact mobile telephone 07709 808276 so that we can discuss your requirements.

Through pre-planned group activity on selected weekdays. Contact mobile telephone 07709 808276 or ask the leader of your organisation or your carer to make contact so that we may make arrangements to suit you.



If approaching from Limavady:- Leave Limavady on the main Limavady to Londonderry road. Just outside the town, go straight ahead at the roundabout signposted Castlerock. Follow the B69 until it joins the A2 at a "T" junction just after crossing the Roe river. Turn left and follow the A2. After about a mile and a half you will cross the level crossing at Bellarena railway station. Continue for a further half mile and you will see our signpost pointing down a lane on the left just before the 40 mph sign at Bellarena village.

If approaching from Coleraine:- Leave Coleraine on the A2 signposted to Castlerock. Pass through Articlave. Do not turn right into Castlerock but continue on the A2. As you reach Downhill you will see Magilligan beach at the foot of the hill. Continue on the A2. You will pass over a railway level crossing, pass Benone leisure complex on your right, pass Cooley's Bar on your right, pass 'Bob's Bar & Bistro' your left and stay on the A2. You will see a 40mph sign at Bellarena village, a black and white church on your right and a Spar supermarket on your right. Just beyond the sign canceling the speed limit you will see our signpost pointing down a lane on the right.

CONTACT The Ulster Gliding Club, 367 Seacoast Road, Bellarena, Co Londonderry, BT49 OLA.

Telephone 028 7775 0301 Sat & Sun only, 0930 hrs to 1730 hrs or call the club mobile anytime on 07709 808276

E-mail secretary@ulsterglidingclub.org or see the club website at

www.ulsterglidingclub.org

Ulster Gliding Club Limited (Number NI 006828) Incorporated in Northern Ireland
Registered office: at PFS & Partners Ltd., 16 Main Street, Limavady, BT49 0EU, Northern Ireland

--- April 2008 ---