

Gliding

A Sport for All



British Gliding Association



Gliding is a truly inclusive sport. Participants come from an extremely wide cross section of our community and clubs belonging to the British Gliding Association (BGA) welcome newcomers of all backgrounds.

Social Inclusion

“Equality and Opportunity” is one of the BGA’s established core values. BGA member clubs are open to all, ensuring that the sport remains socially inclusive and diverse in its reach to communities.

The BGA is committed, through its Strategic Plan, to increasing the popularity of the sport and increasing active participation.



A key element of this is ensuring that gliding training is available to as many people as possible, particularly for disadvantaged and disabled people and those sections of the community currently under-represented in gliding.

Age

People of virtually any age can participate in gliding to the extent that they wish.

In the UK, young people are able by law to fly solo at 16. Training can, and often does, start a year or so before this and it is not uncommon for newly qualified pilots to make their first solo flight on their 16th birthday.

Many gliding clubs maintain strong links with local schools and youth organisations. Virtually all clubs have some form of cadet scheme, offering flying training to young people at significantly reduced cost.

BGA policy states that all member clubs should adopt child and vulnerable adult protection policies and procedures recognising that children’s and vulnerable adults’ welfare is paramount and that

these people have the right to protection. The BGA actively provides training and other materials to help ensure that these policies are developed and implemented in a comprehensive and consistent way.

Pilots can continue to fly gliders until late in life, as long as they maintain an appropriate level of fitness. This fitness standard is the same as that required by the DVLA to drive a car. It is relatively common to see glider pilots continuing to participate actively into their eighties and a number of very senior pilots regularly compete with some success in national and regional championships.

Although often perceived as a non-physical sport, the club oriented nature of gliding means that participants are involved in a wide range of gliding related tasks. Club members help with running the launch point, driving launch winches, maintaining aircraft and vehicles, and a wide range of other tasks. The process of launching a glider involves moving aircraft, lifting cables, running the wing, signalling, etc. and these activities are carried out by club members for their colleagues’ benefit.



As well as minimising the cost of gliding for everybody, these tasks help to provide an environment that is both physically and mentally stimulating for all involved. At a time when the UK has an aging and, too often, increasingly sedentary population, this opportunity for meaningful activity is of great benefit to the individual and the community.



Gender

Men and women participate in gliding on equal terms.

Flying gliders, whether recreationally or competitively, is all about harnessing the power of air currents to reach your goals. This is irrespective of whether your goal is



to achieve your first solo; fly further, higher or faster than you have managed before; complete a pre-planned cross country route; score points for your club in an inter-club competition; win an international championship; or simply to enjoy yourself. In the cockpit the main factors determining success are the pilot's skill and determination.

Many women pilots hold instructor ratings. Many others compete head to head against their male peers in open UK national and regional competitions – there are no separate women's events.

9 UK and UK national records are currently held by women pilots.

At international level, where there are separate women's world championships, UK pilots have acquitted themselves superbly. British women's team members have won two World Championship titles in the last three years.

Disability

Gliding is a form of flying that is ideally suited to those with disabilities or who have limited mobility. As with able bodied pilots, the medical requirements for flying solo are the same as those for driving a car. The British Disabled Flying Association (BDFA) publishes a useful guide to the impact of specific medical conditions on the ability to fly. This is available on their web site (www.bdfa.net/factsheet.htm).

An increasing number of clubs have two seater gliders that have been adapted for hands-only operation. Once in the air, disabled pilots can fly and compete on a level playing field with able bodied pilots.

Hands-only pilots will need well co-ordinated and reasonably strong arms if they wish to take full control of the aircraft. However, even those with little or no strength in their hands can enjoy the challenge of flight, along with a safety pilot.



More and more disabled pilots are discovering the pleasure of motor-less flight and the freedom and challenge that the sport can offer. Many pilots have reached solo standard and beyond and a number have also achieved instructor ratings.

The BGA web site (www.gliding.co.uk) provides a full list of clubs with flying facilities for the disabled.



Cost

There is a common misconception that gliding is an expensive sport. This probably arises because participation in so many other forms of air sport is financially punitive. However, gliding is one of the least expensive ways to fly, making it accessible to the maximum number of people.



Many clubs are run solely by their members, with everybody carrying out essential tasks, using the particular skills that they possess. This helps to keep the cost of flying operations to a minimum.

All BGA clubs provide free training to members in club owned 2-seater gliders. The cost of a half hour training flight is similar to a ticket to watch a football match, a round of drinks or a couple of weeks' subscription to satellite TV.

Once a pilot has flown solo, he or she will probably continue to fly club single seat gliders. Most clubs offer a range of these, from those suitable for early solo pilots through to high performance machines, capable of cross country flights and competition flying. There is no necessity at any stage for pilots to purchase their own glider.

That said, many pilots do want the flexibility and convenience of having their own glider. Gliders last for many years and good second hand examples are available from as little as £2-3,000. Most pilots group together with club mates to buy a glider, sharing the running costs and maintenance duties amongst themselves.

Nearly all clubs provide special assistance to young pilots through bursary or cadet schemes. The BGA offers particular help to those under 25 through reduced fees, flying bursaries, special courses, and competition training programmes that are the envy of the world.

Friendly

Gliding clubs are friendly places. Every club is different with its own particular feel. However, all will be more than welcoming to the new member.

We hope that you will be encouraged to visit your local club to find out more about this fascinating and compelling sport. You can find a list of clubs throughout the UK on our website.



British Gliding Association

Kimberley House
Vaughan Way
Leicester LE1 4SE

bga@gliding.co.uk
www.gliding.co.uk
©BGA, 2005