

A BRIEF HISTORY OF **THE** **TRENT VALLEY GLIDING CLUB**

The origins of the Trent Valley Gliding Club go back to 1965, when 12 members of the Lincolnshire Gliding Club led by the CFI Ziggy Romrig, decided to form a new club. The Lincolnshire Gliding Club was at the time flying along side the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association at RAF Swinderby.

The Lincolnshire Gliding Clubs T31
Flying at RAF Swinderby



On October 22nd 1965 the first meeting was held at Collingham to discuss the formation of a new club. Ziggy was again elected CFI, Mr Riggall Chairman, Peter Hatton Secretary and Peter Holland agreed to be Treasurer. Subscriptions were set at, seniors = 6Gns (£6.30) and juniors = 3Gns (£3.15). Launches would be 4 shillings (20p).

A search began to find a suitable site and after several old war time airfields were rejected, the decision to approach the owners of Sturgate airfield was made. Peter Holland suggested the club should be called Trent Valley Gliding Club due to its location. Once agreements were made with the landlords, a search was made for a glider. Miss D Hatton lent the club £50 which formed the basis of a deposit for a Slingsby T31, found for sale at Camphill Gliding Club in Derbyshire.

Flying began on Sunday 27th February 1966, 11 launches were made with a total of 34 minutes logged. Piano wire was used to launch the glider, which was towed behind Peter Hatton's Land Rover.



Trent Valley Gliding Clubs
First glider, the T31 about
to launch from Sturgate.

After flying each evening, the glider was de-rigged and transported back to a barn in Collingham. Several months later a building became available at Sturgate and the glider could be de-rigged and left in the building.

The old control tower also became available and this was converted into a club house. Launching continued using the straight auto tow method, until Peter Hatton noticed the similarity between the winch mechanism on his tractor and that used by winches at other gliding clubs. Peter experimented with equipment he had and eventually drove the tractor up to Sturgate to try out the new winch. Later the club purchased a Jaguar car to provide pulley launches which proved more efficient. The pulley system involved attaching a steel cable to the glider. The cable ran along the runway and round an anchored pulley which was then fastened to the car which faced the glider. Once the car started accelerating the glider was drawn towards it and pulled up above it.

Several members made loans to the club for the purchase of an Olympia 2B called Blue John. Due to financial difficulties the glider was sold back to those who lent money and hired back to the club.



The Oly 2B “Blue John”
Landing back at Sturgate.

During the early years, the Lincolnshire Aero Club provided aero tow launches.



Aero towing in a T31 is said to be quite an experience!!!

During the coming years many changes happened at Sturgate. Several members were taught to solo standard and beyond. Ziggy the CFI resigned after moving down to Leicester. This left the club with no Full Cat instructor, so help was sort from other gliding clubs in the area. Jack Tarr a full cat instructor from Doncaster gliding club agreed to help out. Two members were also trained up to assistant instructor level and were able to help out with the training of pilots. In July 1969 a Grunau was purchased as a club glider.

Several other gliders were operated at Sturgate including another Olympia and Grunau. These were privately owned but flown by club members.

One of the Grunau's
flown by TVGC
members



Jack Tarr discovered a long building in Hatfield (near Doncaster) for sale, for £200 and thought it would be useful for the club. Several members dismantled it and separated the building in to two halves and joined them side by side at Sturgate to form a very impressive hanger. (This is still in use today at Kirton).



Assembling the hanger at Sturgate. The building was later dismantled and moved to Kirton.

Plans were made to improve the club fleet and a T21 side by side two seater was purchased to complement the T31.



The Clubs First
T21
About to be
launched from
Sturgate

In 1970 another 2 seater was added to the fleet in the form of a Bergfalke bought from Germany. Also a single seater Swallow was purchased to be used for cross country flying. The T31 was sold for £150 later that year.

The club's
Slingsby Swallow



The Bergfalke
being prepared for
launch at Sturgate.

In 1971 the club suffered several blows when, first the Bergfalke was involved in a launching accident, which luckily no one was injured but the glider was written off. Later the same year the T21 was being towed to the launch point in windy conditions when a gust blew the glider on to its back and subsequently it too was written off.

However another T21 was purchased soon after and a Blanik was purchased to replace the Bergfalke for use as an advanced training aircraft.

Ray Parkin & Patrick Holland about to be launched in the Blanik from Sturgate



In 1971 the CFI changed again and Ray Parkin was elected. Flying continued at Sturgate for the next couple of years until 1973, when the landlords decided to sell the runways as hardcore for the new Gainsborough bypass. A new site had to be found for the Trent Valley Gliding Club. Committee members approached the local MP Marcus Kimble to help negotiate the use of either Hemswell or Kirton from the MOD. With planning permission granted, the club began preparations for the move from Sturgate to Kirton in Lindsey.

The CFI's job changed hands again when Ray Parkin moved away to Singapore and Vin Fillingham took up the role during the move to Kirton. As the airfield at Kirton is all grass, the pulley system of launching would be of no use, so members began converting a single decker bus into a winch. The hanger was disassembled and re-assembled at Kirton. The gliders were stored at Hemswell, and the new bus winch was driven to a member's garage/workshop in Retford for final work to be carried out.

The new bus winch shortly after arriving at Kirton



In February 1974 the winch was driven to Kirton and the gliders brought out of storage from Hemswell. The first launch took place at Kirton, but after a false start when the glider only reached about 300ft, it was discovered the bearings on the differential had seized and the equipment had to be redesigned using different bearings. A more successful launch took place the following weekend.



Vin Fillingham and Ray Parkin about to take the first launch at Kirton in the Blanik using the new bus winch

Flying continued very successfully using the new winch. In 1975, an old derelict building was converted into a clubhouse, so water, telephone and electricity could be installed. (Electricity was produced using a generator). Also in this year, a SZD Pirat single seater was added to the club fleet. Approximately 15 private gliders were also flown from Kirton.

As demand for launches increased, it was agreed to build another winch, this time a double decker was converted and proved a great asset to the club.

The second bus winch



In 1977 the Swallow was badly damaged in a landing accident and was subsequently written off. A Ka 8 was purchased to replace the Swallow from Doncaster sailplanes.

In 1978 the Blanik was badly damaged and the hull sold to a member following the insurance pay out. Another 2 seater was found in the form of the very popular ASK13 in 1979.

In 1979 Vin resigned as CFI and John Swannack took on the role and pushed for more advancement in cross country flying. Achievements did increase at Kirton with several members entering competitions (including the popular inter club comp, which TVGC won). Flights of over 7 hours and height gains in excess of 12 000 ft were being flown.

After several years of being able to use the whole airfield, the landlords insisted TVGC operated from 2 marked runways. During the following years several attempts were made to find the club its own site, but to no avail.

During 1982, Mick Ward one of the clubs most active instructors, completed the construction of a new club house with the help of other members.

The following year in 1983 concern was raised when the Red Arrows were based at Scampton and increased the MATZ to 6500ft over a radius of 5nm.

A second ASK 13 was purchased in 1984 to replace the ageing T21 which was sold to a syndicate from Saltby.

John Swannack left the club to form a new club at Gamston near Retford. Bob Baines became the new CFI and continued the improvement of the fleet by adding a K6cr single seater.

In the winter of 1986, Bob resigned as CFI and Brian Griffin was elected. Another incident saw the Pirat written off in a spinning accident, luckily the pilot walked away with only minor injuries.

The MOD agreed to allow aero-towing to take place at Kirton but due to the difficulty of hiring a tug aircraft, the club looked into the possibility of purchasing their own and in 1989 a piper super cub was purchased.



**Trent Valley
Gliding Clubs
first tug
aircraft**

Over the next ten years saw the single decker winch dismantled after completing over 60 000 launches. The K8 was sold and replaced with a Ka 7 two seater, to use as a basic instruction glider which could also be used by early solo pilots. A second hanger was purchased to accommodate the tractors and a tost winch brought over from Germany. A Puchacz two seater glider was also purchased new from Poland to use as an advanced training glider.

Later the Ka 7 was sold, as 4 two seaters seemed too many and another K8 was purchased from the RAFGSA at Syerston, followed by an Astir cs also from Syerston.

The K6cr was sold to members as it required a lot of work to bring it back up to standard. It was replaced with another K6 bought from the Nottingham University Gliding Club.

The super cub was replaced by the piper Pawnee in 1995, this seemed to be more suited to the job of towing gliders. The double decker and tost winches were replaced in 1999, with a lottery funded Super Cat winch.

Members who have held the post of CFI since 1990 are Cliff Whitwell, Robin Parker and now the present CFI Paul Holland who first flew with the club aged 4. Paul is the son of the only founder member still with the club, and still treasurer Peter Holland.

Trent Valley Gliding Club is open to all members of the public. We will welcome any one who wishes to learn to fly, or just try the experience of gliding. We offer training to solo standard and beyond and because we are run as a voluntary club, we are able to keep our costs down and are probably one of the cheapest clubs in the country.



[Trent Valley Gliding Club](#)

Present fleet:

**Puchacz, ASK 13 x 2, Astir, K6cr, K8
Piper Pawnee and Supacat winch**

Compiled by Patrick Holland with extracts taken from
"The First 25 years of Trent Valley Gliding Club" by Patrick Gogan
and personal accounts from Peter Holland (founder Member).