



**MIDLAND
GLIDING CLUB**
FLYING THE LONG MYND SINCE 1934

GLIDE ANGLE

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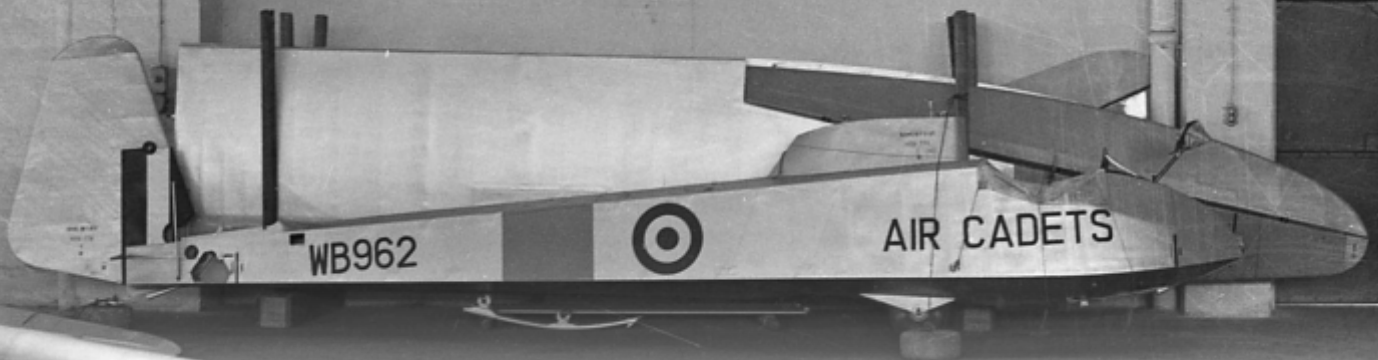
NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of *Glide Angle*

This time we have two articles on how the club is preparing for the future by David Rance and John Young; a review of our winter lecture programme from Neal Clements; an introduction to our new café managers; and, in response to the 'History of the Midland Gliding Club' booklet published before Christmas (still available from the office in person or by post to office@midlandgliding.club, two affectionate reminiscences of visits to the Long Mynd in the past. In honour of the current journey by NASA's *Artemis I* have also included a review of Tim Peake's book on space exploration.

Remember, to keep sending in your contributions for this magazine, it cannot exist without them. Finally, a reminder from Sarah Platt that there are just a few spaces left on our early season courses which are perfect for making progress or getting (back) into the swing of things. Two spaces each (for pre/post solo) on course 04 (11-15 May) and course 05 (18-22 May). More information and booking: www.midlandgliding.club/gliding-course

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Glide Angle is distributed to a large mailing list, and it is proving to be useful in keeping past members in touch with a sport and a place they clearly have a great connection with. The recent special edition *A History of the Midland Gliding Club* also has had this effect which has prompted past members David Toye and J. Robert Gibson to get in touch to recount their fond memories of the club's activities in years gone by.

Four Decades of Flying on the Long Mynd

I was particularly pleased to receive a copy of April's *Glide Angle* as a way of keeping in touch with the happenings at MGC, a club which has meant a great deal to me over my life. I first joined the club in 1961 at the tender age of 19 and last flew at the Mynd in 2002. My memories of the between years might be of interest to older members (*and current members too: ed.*) who may recall some of the people and events that meant so much to me.

I first soloed as a 16-year-old Combined Cadet Force (CCF) cadet at RAF Kirton in Lindsay, Lincolnshire, and after saving up for my first motorcycle joined MGC 4 years later. My first

flight at The Mynd was with Jack Minshall, the course instructor, in an open cockpit Slingsby T21. He was a real character; ex-RAF as were many instructors at that time. He lived in Church Stretton and owned a steam engine jointly with his brother. Jack wasn't too keen on flying open cockpit through the winter and designed a neat canopy which made the aircraft slightly resemble a T46.

Everybody enjoys side by side flying in a T21, even to this day, and I certainly have reason to recall a late afternoon flight with Roger Thwaite in 1961. We took off for what was to be a routine training flight, though despite the stability of the

air, the average trajectory of the aeroplane was upwards! Roger took a sharp interest in what was going on and quietly asked if he could take over both stick and fees for the flight! That was to be one of my few experiences of wave flying, about which little was then known. A wonderful experience, despite the cold, in an open cockpit flying at around 6000 feet.

I recall a memorable flight with the then CFI John Hickling in the club's Slingsby Eagle. He flew an aerobatic sequence over the valley which we both enjoyed, neither of us knowing that a short while later a wing was to fold on the Eagle with tragic loss of life.

Just a lightweight aside, I remember the then Chairman, Bob Neill, striding into the clubhouse early one Saturday morning complaining bitterly about the weight of traffic he had had to contend with, his prophetic words still ringing in my ears: "I don't know how on earth you young chaps are going to manage as it gets worse." How indeed?

Moving on some forty years, and after a long break from gliding, I had taken early retirement and decided to celebrate this with a Mynd course to get to grips with the ASK 21. I turned up at your car park one Sunday afternoon and was fitting the hood to my Morgan when I heard behind me the familiar voice of then Club Chairman Keith Mansell; "Why hood up? It's not going to rain!" Forty years before that, as a young instructor he had sent me off solo in the Slingsby Prefect. When I told him I was on a week's course he commandeered a K21 and took me for my first trip of the week, his familiar instructor's patter getting me back up to speed.

I spent most of that week under the wonderfully structured guidance of Chris Ellis who sent me off solo on the Thursday. I also enjoyed a couple of flights that week with Martin Moss, who unfortunately passed away the following year. Lembit Opik, whom older members may recall as a one-time Lib Dem MP, was a member of that course, converting from

power flying. He later went off with one of The Cheeky Girls, a pop music duo! He was also a sports car enthusiast and very good company that week.

I enjoyed that course so much that I repeated the experience the following year, this time under the eye of John Stuart, Jack Minshall's son in law. I knew that John was a colourful character, but even so, my first flight with him in the rear seat took me by surprise. The Monday morning was dull and cheerless, a light northerly, I think. I suddenly realised that he was determined to find lift off the east slopes! A total no-no I thought but as his student who was I to argue? As we descended lower and lower, the Mynd loomed above us. I stayed quiet to let him concentrate on the inevitable field landing and pulled hard on my straps. We thundered in between the trees, I braced myself as the hedge approached at a rate of knots which John avoided by a ground loop. He was nonchalant about the whole thing giving me the deliberate impression that he was used to this procedure! As we began the long trudge back up to the airfield, he muttered something about picking up the glider after supper with a Land Rover and trailer and in the meantime, we would get another toy out of the cupboard!

Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed my week's flying with him, learning a lot in a strangely unstructured way, including fast stalling and attempts to flick a K21 before soloing again at the end of the week. Thus encouraged I went on to do an aerotow course at Bidford-on-Avon Gliding Club. I also learned a lot from that, but I have to say, that I did not feel the same sense of enjoyment and sheer value for money that I have always felt at The Mynd.

This reminiscence amounts to my farewell to MGC as I am now 84 years old and all my solo flying firmly in the rear-view mirror (*but you are more than welcome to come back and fly P2 David, perhaps even in the T21: ed.*).

David Toye



The 1979 Cambridge University Gliding Club's Mynd Camp

J. Robert Gibson visited the club in the 1970s as part of a Cambridge University expedition and he recounts his experiences of that time.

I first visited the Mynd in September 1979 on a Cambridge University Gliding Club (CUGC) camp. This was led by Anthony Edwards who brought with him a new bungee, purchased with the club's 'Bungee Fund' which he personally kept.

As the most junior member of the Camp, I had to wait until late on the Monday for my first flight. This was a K13 bungee launch with Steve Longland (author of *Gliding: From Passenger to Pilot*, 2012) as P1. After a smooth gentle take-off, I experienced a wonderful 32 minutes of ridge soaring. The next day, after a P2 winch launch, I was allowed to do solo winch launches in the CUGC Swallow for two short circuits followed by the joy of a flight in their Olympia 2B lasting an hour and 16 minutes.

As the week progressed, the queue for launches diminished and my camp ended with 30 launches over the six days including one in a K8 - but the

Oly was the best! One day, when it was rather windy, I chose to fly down towards the airfield at quite a high speed as this gave me more control, and the ground speed would be low given the headwind. I knew I could then level out just above the ground and bleed off the excess speed. One of the pilots watching commented afterwards that because of its speed the Oly actually howled as it approached! Nevertheless, he agreed that the approach was safe.

Soon after that camp I moved to Hong Kong and have only been able to revisit MGC in recent years while visiting my son, who now lives in Shrewsbury. Reflecting on my experience from the 1979 camp I firmly believe that expeditions and camps like this are a great way for MGC to recruit future members. I wonder, how many current members were introduced to the Mynd this way? Good luck and safe flying to you all.

J. Robert Gibson



What Myndies do on Saturday Evenings in Winter

During the winter season we need to keep the club active, and we also need to support our caterers and offer them a reason to support us. If the flying weather has not been too good, it's also great to get our members together and have a natter! To help us achieve that we have been running winter events now for many years, not only do they keep us engaged with the world of flying but they provide the opportunity to keep us informed and ready for the next season. The club has annual events like the November members' evening and the AGM in March; however, we also organise talks on a Saturday night. This provides the benefit of an interesting talk followed by a sociable meal, hopefully, following a winter flying day.

The 2025/26 winter series included some fascinating talks. Mike Groves of SkyLaunch introduced us to elements of winching you would not dream of - you will never look at a Bond film in the same way again! Doug Arnold presented an absorbing lecture on Glasflügel gliders with his lively presentation and in-depth knowledge. And, in March, after our AGM, we had a very inspiring talk from Sir Stephen Hillier, the retired Air Chief Marshall and now chair of the CAA. Sir Stephen described how he became a pilot, his career as a fighter pilot, and his experiences as a senior commander in various operations. The room was packed out and the

descriptions of a life in the RAF including video footage from the Gulf war were eye-popping. As chair of the CAA, he was able to describe the issues facing all of us involved in aviation and make some learned predictions about what the future may bring. He did hold out some hope for us regarding drones and was able to give us feedback regarding the issues facing general aviation and gliding. The dining room was packed afterward with extra tables needed for the bumper turn out.

In previous years we have had Birmingham Air traffic, CHIRP, electronic conspicuity explained, the chief executive of the BGA, the national coach, Gerry the Giro and the list goes on. However, we are always looking out for speakers for next winter's series. If you can think of a topic or if you know someone who would be interesting to listen to please email Neal (Nealxclements@gmail.com) or Denise (denisehughes494@icloud.com) with your suggestions. These talks are great for the club and great for members. We do not make a charge for attending (though a small contribution to help pay for the speakers' expenses is requested) so if you haven't been along yet, please do turn up next winter for an informative, enjoyable and sociable evening out.

Neal Clements



The Midland Gliding Club Strategy 2025-2030 Part I

Over the past year our Vice-Chair, John Young has led an in-depth study into the direction the club needs to move in order to continue successfully into the future.

Here is Part I of this process, with Part II, describing the detail of this still developing initiative in the next issue of *Glide Angle*.

Gliding is facing an existential crisis. From around 10,000 glider pilots and 95 clubs in the UK in 1990 there are now only about 7,000 pilots and 75 active clubs. Our club was founded in 1934 and is one of the oldest in the country - the purpose of the Midland Gliding Club Strategy 2025-2030 is to make sure we continue to thrive in this increasingly challenging environment.

Members will know that we started with an online survey in October 2024 addressing three main questions: What would you like the club to be like in 10 years' time? What would you like to

be getting out of the Club in 10 years' time? What changes would you like to make over the next 10 years? There were an astonishing 227 responses from 64 members totalling nearly 6,000 words. Analysis distilled this into 10 aspects of the club that members liked, eight benefits they would like to receive from the club and seven areas we could improve. We presented the results at the at the Members' Forum in November 2024 during which the results of the survey were agreed to be broadly correct. The club already has excellent flying and social facilities but needs to maintain these, and



we have therefore prioritised seven areas for improvement:

- Infrastructure and facilities (26 votes)
- Improved communication and involvement (16)
- Marketing and outreach (13)
- Operational improvements (12)
- Finance and revenue (12)
- Training and mentoring (12)
- Youth engagement (10)

Then through a series of six online meetings in February and March 2025, members contributed to developing the strategy. The first and most important part of the Strategy is the vision of what we want the club to be like in 2030:

In 2030 the Midland Gliding Club will be a thriving friendly club supporting the full range of members' ambitions including training to solo, progress towards BGA achievements, cross-country and competitions, and instructor training. Its unique geographical location with easy

access to large areas of unrestricted airspace and ridge, thermal and wave lift will provide one of the best soaring sites in the country. Its training fleet of 2-seaters and single seaters, efficient 7-day operations, a full-size glider cockpit simulator and professionally led 5-day courses from April to September will make it one of the leading gliding training centres in the UK attracting trainees from all over the world. Safety will underpin all of all our operations. We will have professional maintenance and repair expertise on site and will provide training and access to maintenance facilities for private owners. With homely on-site catering and accommodation, the club will frequently host visiting groups from other clubs, will organise expeditions to other gliding sites, and will have a vibrant social programme. MGC's diverse and inclusive members will all actively contribute to the flying, maintenance and management activities necessary to keep the club running.

John Young



Midland Gliding Club Café

From the beginning of April there will be new faces running the kitchen at the club. Matt Williams and his family have farmed the south end of the Mynd for generations and have run Shropshire Hills Catering for many years, serving all sorts of events from christenings and parties to weddings and pheasant shoots. Their record number of people served at a single event is a wedding celebration for 750!

The Williams' family-run business was born out of a passion for top-quality, home-produced meat and meat products, such as sausages, bacon, and burgers. With many years of experience in the farming industry, they only use the top-quality produce that Shropshire has to offer. They provide dishes 'from farm to plate' and all produce is locally sourced or homemade from their farm, so they can assure the provenance of

their food. All of Matt's family will be involved with the cafe, especially his mother-in-law, Helen, who will be frequently on site (Matt and Helen are pictured on the front of this issue of *Glide Angle*).

Matt has many exciting ideas which he will steadily roll out once he has got a feel for the club. He wants to hear members' ideas so we will soon be arranging a survey, but he is already addressing the need to prioritise serving members at lunchtime on busy flying days and will be discounting members' food by 10% compared to the published (public) menu. His first big test will be catering for the Juniors' weekend in April. Talk about a baptism of fire!

We wish Matt and his family well in their new venture and look forward to sampling their food.



Airfield and Grounds

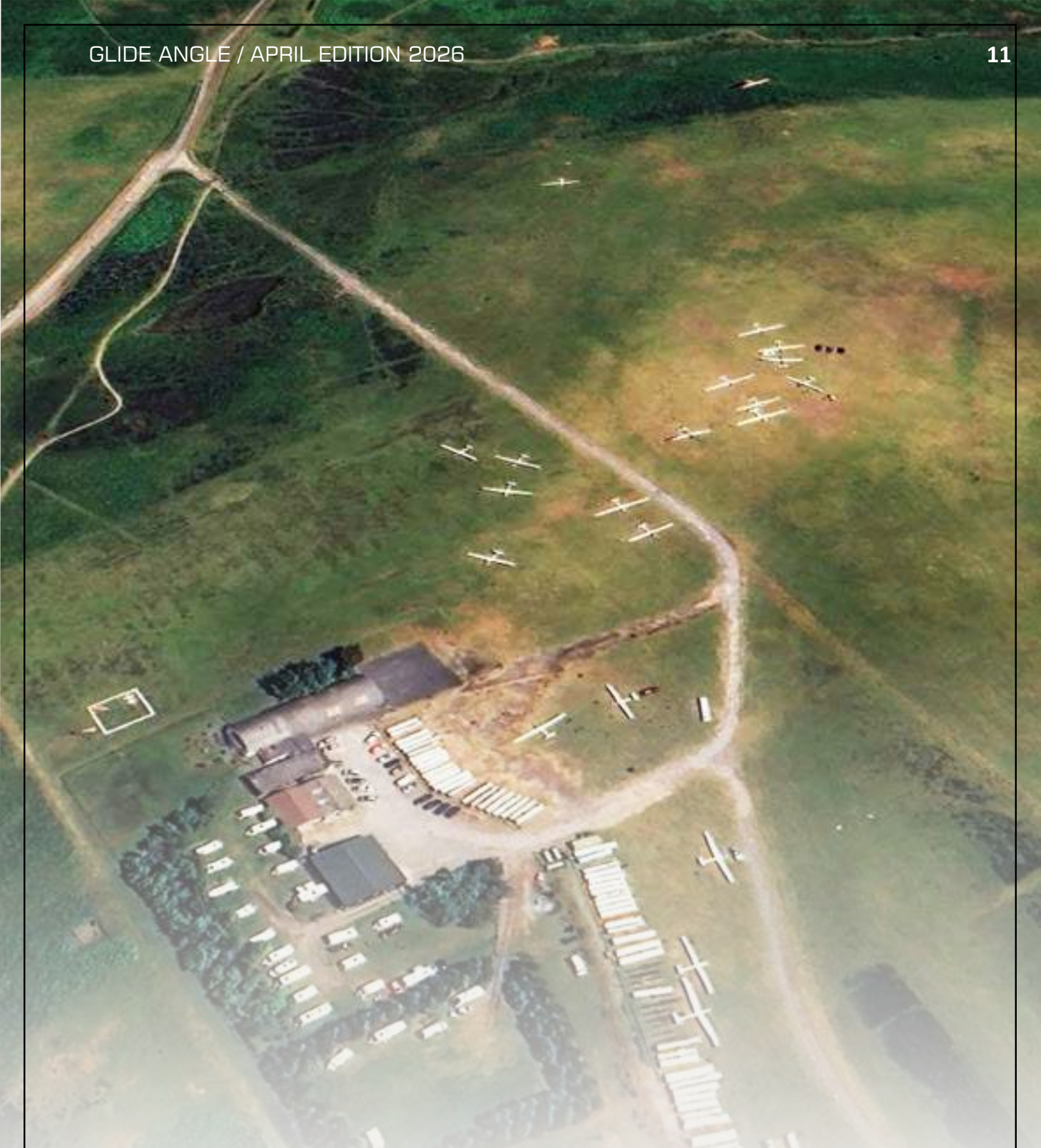
David Rance has made invaluable contributions to the club's infrastructure over the years and has employed his enviable store of knowledge and experience in this role. Here he describes an upcoming major improvement to the club's access.

I have been flying at the club since the last century and one of the constant frustrations over that period has been the parlous state of the road from the gate into the clubhouse car park. It's the first thing anybody coming to the club experiences, and I have always thought it creates a really poor impression. In the old days when you could still smoke on an airliner, the seat back in front of you would have an ashtray (yes, really!) that was often pretty disgusting and it always made me wonder that if they couldn't be bothered to clean the ashtrays, could they be bothered to service the engines? I think the poor state of our road creates the same impression.

The problems with keeping it in good order have been many fold. The Mynd is quite wet at times and the ground water level can be quite high. The ground freezes and expands and then contracts a little again when it thaws out and

dries, loosening the stone. Much of the traffic, which despite prominent signage still doesn't travel slowly and considerably, which puts a big strain on the road's structure.

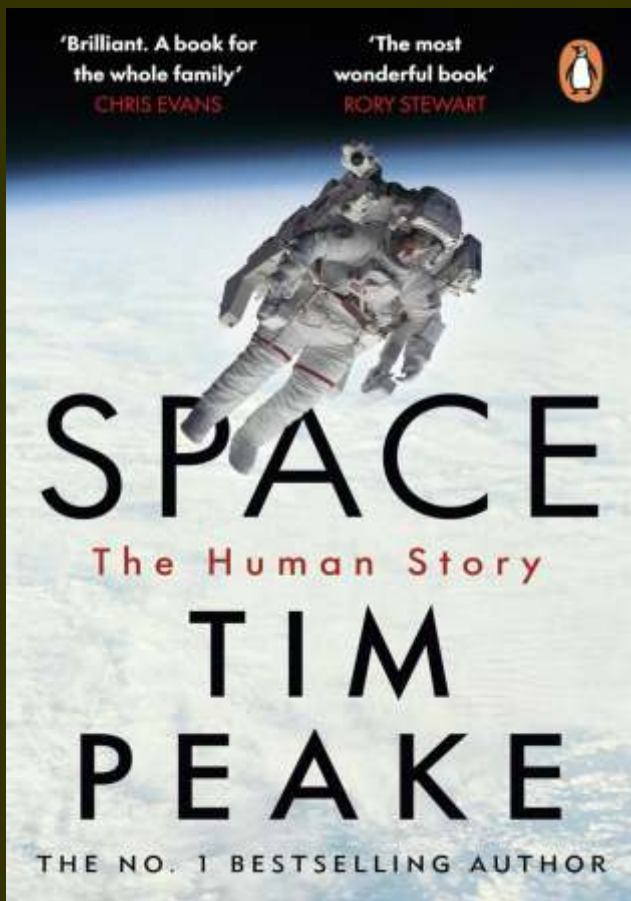
Inevitably pot-holes form and fill with water, and when a car tyre crashes into them this creates a hydraulic shock wave that moves sideways into the surrounding stone and loosens the road surface a bit more. There have been a few bits of tarmac laid on the drive, mostly quite thin coverings, but they have nevertheless lasted pretty well. The piece by the gate has survived well for more than ten years. In the non-tarmac areas we have filled the holes and compacted it down with vibrating rollers several times in the last twelve months, the last time just after Christmas, but by early March the road was as bad as ever and that was during a period when there was very little club flying and associated traffic.



However, the club has now been left an extraordinarily generous legacy from Eddie Humphries, a part of which has now been designated for tarmacking the road from the gate to the gas tanks. Most of the track has a good hard base suitable for capping with tarmac but there are some bits that are particularly badly potholed, which we will probably need to dig out and re-lay before topping. This is all under

investigation and we are still gathering costings and working out the best way to proceed, however, by mid-summer we are hoping that for the first time we will have a new all-weather road surface that matches the standard of our aircraft. Here's looking forward to a smooth ride on the ground as well as in the sky.

David Rance



Book Review

Tim Peake, *Space: The Human Story* (Penguin, 2024)

Tim Peake is well known as the British astronaut who spent 186 days on the International Space Station as a member of the 2016 Principia mission, so he is well qualified as author of this book that describes the human side of space exploration. He explores what it takes to be an astronaut, put your life at serious risk in dangerous untried vehicles and environments, and to have an overwhelming desire to do just that. He examines the intellectual and personal attributes of many of these very fortunate (or foolish, depending on your perspective) space travellers, and tries to discover not only what drives them to work incredibly hard to be a part of their nations' space programmes, but also how their adventures in space have subsequently affected them.

This is a retelling of the story of space exploration but told from a new perspective that seems fresh. He highlights stories that shed light on the human experience which have not previously been a priority for the official records, and this is told with wit and empathy. There is the story of the US Spacelab crew that rebelled against the control of mission control and did their own thing for most of their month-long mission. Back on Earth, he notes that divorce is unfortunately very frequent for space travellers, though exceeded statistically by Strictly Come Dancing contestants! There are frequent well-described accounts of hair-raising events, many of which came close to killing the astronauts, and some, more well-known, which did. The reader is left with no doubt that this group of individuals are very special people indeed, courageous and with remarkable skills.

Peake is undoubtedly well placed to tell these stories, as a test pilot, ex-military, and someone who has been based both at NASA and at the Russian space centre, Baikonur. He is also a gifted writer. Peake's own experiences are retold but only to inform the reader first-hand about the physical sensations of space travel, and it is quite clear that his principal subject is all the other astronauts, some of whom he knew personally. This is both an entertaining and informative read which contributes something new for those interested in space exploration. Even for those who are not, because the book is about people and their experiences in quite unique circumstances, it is very possible they might enjoy it too.

Rob Kronenburg

SAVE THE DATE

DATE	TYPE	DETAILS
20/4/2026	Event	MGC Courses begin
22-30/8/2026	Event	Task Week



MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB

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