

Brief History

The Lakes Gliding Club was founded in July 1930 and was originally called The Furness Gliding Club. Some 50 clubs were started in 1930. The Lakes Gliding Club was in there early and was considered to be the Wasserkuppe (German gliding centre) of England due to the hills and their gentle slopes. The club was formally operated as The Furness Gliding Propriety Ltd. The original brass plaque is hanging behind our bar. We are still the same Ltd. Company but with a different trading name ----- The Lakes Gliding Club.

The founding members of the Lakes G C were Commander Craven, the top man of Vickers Armstrong Ltd. (BAE Systems today), John Fisher later Sir John, owner and top man of Fisher's and Joseph Stanley Redshaw, a Director of Vickers and father of Sir Leonard Redshaw. These three put in the initial funds that got the Club 'off the ground'. The Club started at Gleaston Park Farm in July 1930 and moved to Kirkby Moors by October 1930 when the first flight occurred. The pilot is believed to have been Frederic Pilling (A certificate No 58) who was also one of the founding members of The British Gliding Association (BGA).

In 1932 the BGA held its second Open Class gliding competition in the UK. It is difficult for today's gliding enthusiasts to appreciate that our site was the envy of the UK and one of 7 soaring sites in the UK. In 1931 the UK distance record was 8.3mls, by 1932 this was 15mls achieved by Mungo Buxton (C certificate No 5) at our club and at this competition.

The War arrived in 1939 and curtailed our Clubs activities. All the gliders were commandeered by the MOD to assist in training fighter and bomber pilots. The Club lost over a third of its active members in the War, those remaining helped to form 188 Gliding School, Air Training Corps around 1943/44. Cyril Redshaw (founder member and Len's brother) kept a diary of this period and the Club though technically dormant was kept in being courtesy of the MOD and Len. By this time Len was Secretary of the Club and Officer in charge 188 Gliding School. Cark airfield at Flookborough was the base until 1946 when they moved to Walney. 188 G S operated there until 1955 when it was disbanded. Len however had acquired an Oly 2b, the real hot ship of its time in 1947, and flew this from Walney, Kirkby Moors and Tow Top. For a few years he was the only pilot still flying in this area and gained a reputation in the UK gliding movement as being 'that man from the North'. One notable character from this period is Cec Batty who gets mentioned in Cyril's diary, our oldest member for many years.

In 1956 two enthusiastic gliding types approached Len from Kendal. They wanted to start a gliding club, had found a potential site on Tebay Fell and would he come and try flying off it. This he did in July 1956, two flights in-between thunderstorms. This was good enough for Matthew Hall and Ron Reid, by 1957 they were 'up and away'. They became the fathers of a revitalized Gliding Club and Len handed over the Furness Gliding Proprietary Ltd.

The Furness G C was now The Lakes G C. Lord Lonsdale of Lowther was the new Club President and looked after the G C's interest for many years. By 1962 the Club moved down to Walney for the winter, the peat surface at Tebay not being useable. History repeated itself as this was the same problem on Ireleth. By 1964 Walney had become our home and the top men of Vickers again our source of Presidents.

The Club is the proud guardian of a complete set of Sailplane & Gliding magazines dating back to issue 1 in 1930. The collection was meticulously preserved over the years by Sir Leonard Redshaw and was kindly given to the club, complete with display cabinets and gliding books in 1999, by the Redshaw family for members' enjoyment.

From the various magazines, newspaper cuttings and log books the following key dates can be found;

- British Gliding Association formed, March 27 1930
- Furness Gliding Club officially formed, Gleaston Park Farm, July 1930
- First flight from Ireleth, one glider and spare fuselage, Oct 27 1930
- Cyril Redshaw obtains A Certificate No 221. 1931
- First flight Birkrigg, estimated 1931
- Second National Gliding Competition, organised by the Furness Gliding Club September 1932
- UK distance record broken from Kirby Moors by Mungo Buxton, 15mls, landed north end Coniston. Sept 1932
- New hangar completed on Kirby Moors, four gliders. 1936
- All gliders commandeered by MOD. 1940
- No 188 ATC Gliding School starts at Cark Airfield. Sept 1944
- Cec Batty appears at Cark for first time, 26th November 1944
- Cec does 3 ground skids and 3 low hops, 19th August 1945
- Barrows first air taxi starts at Walney, described as a spin-off from The Furness G C. July 1946
- No 188 Gliding School moves to Walney. Oct 1946
- Len Redshaw acquires Oly 2b, first hot ship Walney, 6 July 1947
- First complete Silver by the Furness G C achieved Len Redshaw, Oly 2B, 9th May 1948
- First aerotow from Walney. 1953
- 188 G S ceases to operate, 1955
- Ron Reid and Matthew Hall contemplate starting a gliding club, 1955
- First test flight Tebay by Len. July 2 1956
- Official opening of the new Lakes G C by Lord Lonsdale, 4 solo 1 two seat gliders. June 14 1957
- Lakes G C returns to Walney for the winter of 1962
- Lakes G C abandons Tebay in favour of Walney, 1964
- First completion of all Gold C legs from Walney, 15th August 1983
- First Diamond Goal from Walney, 335km closed triangle, 3rd May 1993
- First Diamond Height from Walney, 8th May 1995, gain 18667ft, absolute 19258ft
- First Diamond Distance from Walney, 503km, Walney/Staindrop/Worksop/Helmsley/Walney. 19th July 1997
- Lakes Gliding Club wins the National Two Seater Competition, August 2002 and August 2006