

Flying High

"Take up slack!"
"Cable Live!"
" All Out!"

Those are the last words I hear before I am hauled bodily off 'terra firma' and into the 'wild blue yonder'. I am a glider pilot or at least enough of one to say so without false pride. I love this sport because it is the only activity I know where you, the pilot, are on your own and it is all up to you alone to land in one piece.

Gliding has recently been criticised as being too dangerous. But I feel that it is only dangerous if you yourself make it so. Any sport can be dangerous if approached in a casual manner or without adequate training. I was lucky because I **was** able to join a Royal Air Force Gliding Club in Germany and receive an excellent training that **ensures** ensured my safety and my enjoyment of gliding.

I started gliding at the age of 14; I went solo (happy day!) one month after my 16th birthday, and I have been flying whenever I can, for, once gliding gets into your blood, it stays there.

To understand, **at least in part**, why so many people glide, let me take you on a circuit of an airfield 'somewhere in England'. Having put on our 'chutes and strapped into the glider, we go through the pre- night checks. The mnemonic is CBSITCB: which means Controls, Ballast, Straps, Instruments, Trim, Canopy, Brakes. So, once everything from altimeter to 'trim' (or flying balance) has been checked, it is time to attach the cable.

The cable, by the way, is a very strong length of piano-wire which is either connected to a drum winch or a light aeroplane.

"Cable On!"

A helper attaches the cable to the hook set into the fuselage, whilst another helper (preferably the beautiful girl one always seems to find in any gliding club) holds the wings level.

"Take up slack!"

By saying this, and holding two fingers in the air, one indicates to the Winch Controller (usually the boyfriend of the beautiful girl holding your wing-tip) that you desire him to tell the winch staff to reel in the cable slowly until it is taut.

Dialogue as introduction.
Starting at beginning but could begin at the landing and work way back.... Or 'in media res' (in the middle) ie when flying then flashback to takeoff/look forward to landing

Thoughts and feelings. 'Terra firma'/ 'wild blue yonder' are allusions to Latin/other writing about flying

Reflection - lessons learnt or to be learnt

Watch for spelling, punctuation and grammar - especially at Higher!

Reflection on how enjoyable or satisfying gliding is

Informative and gives background detail to enable reader to better understand what's going on. By saying 'at least in part' it implies you need to try for yourself to fully understand what it is about

Interspersing dialogue throughout keeps the narrative flowing and encourages reader to carry on

Humorous aside

Humorous aside

As the glider slowly moves forward we tell the WC to speed up the winch (or plane), by waving the two fingers and yelling out

"All Out!"

Keeping the control stick slightly forward we slide with increasing speed until, suddenly, with a whoosh, a bang and a prayer/oath/attack of sheer terror/pained silence, we leave the ground and climb steadily upwards at 50, 52 knots, gradually easing back on the stick. By this time the girl on your wing should have let go, if not, release the cable and start again...

Humorous aside
Thoughts and feelings
Imagery - **'whoosh/bang'**
onomatopoeia.
Humour (girl)

As we near the 1000-foot mark (2,000 if towed by a plane) we push the nose down (peel away) and release the cable by pulling a little yellow knob, appropriately marked 'Pull Hard'. Push the stick to the right and apply right rudder: centralise, straighten out." so we turn to the right (starboard to the pundits) and glide to the nearest spot where we are likely to find a thermal. A thermal is a column of rising hot air, and a glider, being light and manoeuvrable, can gain height by circling in a thermal.

'How about a loop?'

'Right. Ease the joystick forward, keeping the wings level.'

Assuming that we had 2,000 feet, we would dive to approximately 1,500 before gradually pulling the stick back. As we roll over, we push the stick forward and keep the wings level by referring to the horizon, upside down as it is.

At present my record for looping-the-loop is 22 consecutive loops with Con Greaves, ex-European Champion.

Additional factoid for interest

By the time our loop is finished, we are down to about 1,000 feet and it is time to start thinking about landing. So we complete the circuit, and line the glider up with the landing area and decrease speed by pulling out the airbrakes. Just before we plunge into the ground, we pull the airbrakes in slightly and 'round-out'. That is, we ease the glider on to the ground by holding it off until it loses flying speed and thus its lift. If we round out too late we will almost certainly give an impression of a kangaroo, to our everlasting shame.

Humour

"We're down! I say, you're looking rather pale.....,"

Ends as it starts - with dialogue

DAVID TERRON when Lower Sixth (S5) at Princethrope College
(written in 1976 aged 16)

Other points: more reflection? Especially at the end? More description or comment on feelings of awe/euphoria as I soar in the air with no engine, just silence. Add a quote about 'slip the surly bonds of Earth' from "High Flight" a poem which influenced this piece's title? Reflection on the maturity that gliding solo forces you to show?