

The South East Take to the Sky!



**By Sarah Jarrett 'Mazda Chick'
South East Area Joint AC**



Well how did this all start? It was at our local East Kent pub meet that one of our South East MX-5 Owners Club members Peter Mather, suggested to me that it would be good to have a gliding evening event and BBQ. Peter is a member of the British Gliding Association and said that we could consider having the event at the Kent Gliding Club at Challock. I must admit at first I thought that we may not get many people interested in this, but I am pleased to say that we ended up with twenty eight members all wanting to have a go. The fascination of silent flight and managing to stay high in the sky without an engine was obviously the attraction!

The dates then had to be set and 25 June and 16 July 2011 were decided on so then all we had to do was to wait for the weather to be on our side.

The first group on the 25 June, which included myself, managed to have their go at gliding. The weather, although touch and go throughout

the day, came right for us at 4pm and we were ready to go. This was for most the first ever lesson. We were flying an ASK21 two seater trainer and this is where we found out that we had to wear a parachute no options (I was pleased to say) and that we as newbies would be sitting in the front of the glider! After several instructions our first flight was to be an aero tow flight. This is where you are towed up to 2500 feet by a little Piper Pawnee tow plane, then the glider is released gently to float high above the airfield and then it is down to you to find the thermals. This was where I had a hands-on lesson on how the controls work: coordination of the stick and rudder and trying to keep the wings level and making gentle, graceful turns! All I can say it was fantastic. The views over the Weald of Kent were spectacular.





It was a magical world of soaring silently below the clouds and looking at the patchwork of fields below. The flight lasted about 15 minutes and then it was back to earth, not with a bump I am pleased to say. Then it was time to have a go at the winch launch. This is totally different and instead of the gentle flight up to the sky by the aero tow, the winch basically takes you almost vertically up to the sky using an 8.4 litre V-8 powered sky launch winch. The exhilaration was amazing but not for the faint-hearted.

Everyone else took their turn and we ended up with very rosy faces as the sun beat down on us all. We ended the evening with a lovely BBQ with all the volunteer instructors who had given us the instruction that evening.

The next arranged date, 16 July, proved a little trickier. The weather was against the next group so we had to postpone and reorganise the date for the 20 August when I am pleased to say everyone managed to get two flights in. I also got to have one more winch flight, before the darker evening settled in.

We helped put all the gliders to bed and finished with another BBQ. Everyone that

took part had a fantastic time and was an experience they will remember for a very long time - it's not every day you go gliding.

I would like to thank the Kent Gliding Club and volunteer instructors for all their help and for making both dates a really enjoyable event.

Thank you!

