

History of the EPGC

Written by Administrator

The Eastern Province Gliding Club started life in 1964 as the Eastern Province Sailplane Club, the only gliding club in the country calling itself a "Sailplane" club, until it was changed to the present name in 1994.

In about 1954, some ten years before our club was established, a small group of enthusiasts in Port Elizabeth had tried to get a gliding club going and they had raised a small amount of money through their own contributions, and donations. However they were not successful in locating an affordable two-seat basic trainer, so they disbanded. They all agreed however, as did the donors, that the funds be retained in trust by one of their number in the hope that at some future time a club would be formed, and the money could then be given to that club.

In 1963 another group of friends in Port Elizabeth, aviation enthusiasts of course, decided to try to form a gliding club. They were not aware of the attempt made some 10 years earlier but fortunately some of the original group heard of the aspirations of the younger group, and made contact. Two of the original group, John Andrews and Peter Kotze, both Korean War pilots, were still enthusiastic about the idea and they released the trust funds for the new club.

The founding members, so far as can be recalled, comprised the said John Andrews and Peter Kotze who were to be the club's first instructors, and they together with Eric Buchel, Doug Searle and Tony Gingell formed the steering committee. With entrance fees from new members an old derelict wood and iron hangar was bought at Uitenhage airfield, about 40km from Port Elizabeth, and virtually rebuilt by the members.

The money received from the trust was the princely sum of 300 Pounds, just before decimalisation, the equivalent then of R600. By a stroke of good fortune this was exactly the amount that the new group had to pay for an old tandem two-seat glider they found disassembled and strung up in the roof of an old hangar at Baragwanath. It was a Schleicher 2-22, American built, wood and fabric, strutted high wing, with a half canopy over the front cockpit only. The new group were able to borrow a glider trailer from the Border Gliding Club in East London, and three of the group, young working chaps with jobs to be in on Friday and Monday, undertook the trip to Johannesburg, got the glider down, trailered it in the ill-fitting trailer, and trekked it down to Port Elizabeth all in the course of a two day weekend.

The club was then up and running by early 1964. Launch was by means of a direct cable motor

History of the EPGC

Written by Administrator

car tow, and 400 feet was an excellent launch. Flights on a still day were often 1 minute, and that was a full circuit and not just straight ahead, and a 3 minute flight was almost worthy of a badge.

Some years after its birth the club had enough money to pay for the construction of a brand new very large hangar which still serves the club today.. Initially the pub, indispensable to any gliding club, was housed in this or that corner of the hangar, then in a pre-fab the club bought and erected themselves, laying on water and a septic tank, and currently in an old brick building on the airfield, extensively restored by members.

Over the years many different gliders have been brought and sold by the club, including K7's, a K8, a K13, an L-Spatz 55, a Phoebus, a Bergvalke and a Blanik. The club fleet presently comprises a Twin Astir, an Astir Jeans, a Skylark and a Motor-Falke.

The club has operated successfully since 1964, flying once a weekend, weather permitting, and as at this time, 2008, we reckon we're good for another 44 years!