



WOMEN IN GLIDING

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Strategies gathered from the international gliding community to improve the Australian female glider pilot participation and retention rate

Leonie Furze
ozglidergal@hotmail.com

Table of Contents

Synopsis.....	2
Introduction.....	2
Background.....	2
Female Gliding in the United States of America	3
The Women Soaring Pilots Association	3
Female Gliding in Canada – York Gliding Club	8
The United States of America - Lessons for WIG Australia.....	8
Female Gliding in the United Kingdom	9
Women Glide UK.....	9
The European Gliding Union.....	15
BGA Development.....	16
The United Kingdom - Lessons for WIG Australia.....	16
Female Gliding in France	17
The Centre National de Vol à Voile	17
French Government funding for development initiatives	17
France – Lessons for WIG Australia.....	20
Female Gliding in Italy.....	21
Background.....	21
Fly Pink.....	21
The History of International Gliding Contests, European and World Championships for Women.	23
An Invitation to our National Gliding Teams.....	24
Italy – Lessons for WIG Australia	29
Conclusion.....	30

Synopsis

As the Australian Women's representative for the Gliding Federation of Australia's Development Committee I have been troubled by the low number of women taking up gliding in Australia and also by the poor retention rate. An invitation to attend the WSPA seminar in Moriarty was the inspiration behind a 5 month around the world trip in search of ideas on how the GFA can reverse this trend. Part holiday, part research assignment, it has been an enjoyable opportunity to experience gliding in different countries.

Introduction

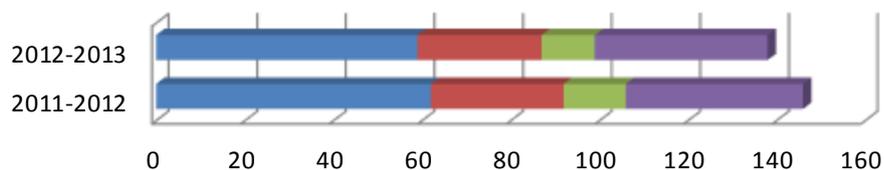
While travelling to various countries around the world in my ambitious project to increase Australia's female glider pilot participation rate I discovered that some of the successful initiatives are not specifically focused on female glider pilots however I have included all initiatives that I believe are growing female participation or have the potential to do so.

My research/holiday has taken me from The United States of America to England, France and Italy. By the end of my journey I am confident that the collation of all of the ideas gathered will form a document that can be shared to benefit not only Australia but the international gliding community as a whole. It is my hope that now we have opened the lines of communication between our countries we can continue to work together so that our fabulous sport can grow and prosper.

Background

For the financial year 2011-2012 there were 177 women join the Gliding Federation of Australia while in the 2012-2013 financial year there were just 157, a decline of 11%. However this figure includes short term members and overseas pilots so a more accurate picture would be to focus on full time members, comprising of Adult, Adult Family, Student Family and Students. If we are to look at these 12 month members over the same period we find a decline of 146 to 138, 5.5%. Although this figure does not look as bad we need to reverse this trend and grow our female membership.

2012-13 and 2011-12 Financial Year Full Time Female Member Comparison



	2011-2012	2012-2013
ADULT	62	59
ADULT FAMILY	30	28
STUDENT FAMILY	14	12
STUDENT	40	39

Female Gliding in the United States of America

The Women Soaring Pilots Association

The first stop on my itinerary was to attend the Women Soaring Pilots Association (WSPA) Seminar in Moriarty, New Mexico from 8-12 July 2013. The Women Soaring Pilots Association (WSPA) is an international organisation and a Division of the Soaring Society of America (SSA). The purpose of the association is to encourage the growth of women's participation in soaring. To that end, the association may:

1. Establish and maintain a community of women soaring pilots through print and online media
2. Sponsor an annual women soaring seminar
3. Offer scholarships to women for flight training and participation in soaring activities
4. Establish handicapped records to recognise women's soaring achievements
5. Support members who fly in soaring competitions
6. Represent women soaring pilots at conventions, trade shows, and other venues. (Women Soaring Pilots Association Bylaws, Revised December 15, 2012 by membership vote)

2013 is the 36th year that there has been an annual Women Soaring Seminar. Women soaring pilots have been gathering since 1979 for non-contest get-togethers, a week of comradeship, enlightenment, mentoring, training and soaring. Women make up 6% of the Soaring Society in America's (SSA) membership of approximately 10,900 glider pilots. The seminars provide a platform for the relatively few and far spread women to meet, get to know each other, learn, mentor each other and form friendships. The first seminar took place in Tehachapi, California and was co-sponsored by the gliderport and by the SSA. The Women Soaring Pilots Association (WSPA) was conceived in a dusty trailer at the 1985 Reno, Nevada, Women Soaring Seminar (Air Sailing) and became a non-profit legal entity run by its members at the next seminar in Tucson, Arizona. Twenty seven years later this organisation is vibrant and active and continues to encourage and to support women to soar. Seven scholarships and the Anne Morrow Lindbergh Trophy were established to reach these goals. (Women Soaring Pilots Association 2013 Seminar Handout, 2013) A new scholarship was added at the end of 2015 making it eight. Scholarships range from support for beginners to support for the commercial and for the Certified Flight Instructors – Gliding (CFIG) ratings as well as scholarships to attend the Women Soaring Seminar.

Neita Montague, WSPA International President (and also past Vice President and Seminar Coordinator) was extremely helpful in outlining the structure of the WSPA and how the organisation has managed to achieve strong growth of its membership in recent years. The WSPA board members are re-elected every two years which gives a new committee time to settle into their roles and achieve goals. Board members are encouraged to serve a second two year term as well as to train their replacements through committee work. Sponsorship is a key driver of the organisation, especially the seminar, and all women that attend are keen to assist with raising money through the seminar shop, by contributing and soliciting raffle items, selling and buying raffle tickets. The organisation also raises money through an annual membership fee of \$20, the seminar registration cost and the additional \$15 on top of registration fee that goes towards sponsoring a woman for the next year's seminar. Many WSPA members also donate extra funds to go towards sponsorship. In

fact WSPA raised money and acted as a conduit from various sources for a total of around \$15,000 to assist Sarah Arnold to go to the Women's Worlds. The pride in Sarah attending this event was evident.

Neita has been involved with women in gliding in the USA for many years and commented that participation was at its highest level in the 1970s and 80s when the women's movement was in force. Single women had money and time. After a lull of a few years there is renewed interest in the WSPA with the current membership up to 256 including associate members. Quite a few men also support the association as associate members, not just in time, but also financially and in helping out at the seminars. Men also sign up and attend the seminars because of the excellent training given .

The WSPA Seminar



The 2013 WSPA seminar in New Mexico was organised by local Connie Buenafe and Vice President/Seminar Coordinator Maja Djuriscic. Together they organised gliders, instructors, and a crew every day to assist with launching, lectures and opportunities to learn. The theme for the seminar was 'Stretching Your Horizons' and Connie was keen to give all attending pilots the opportunity to mentor and be mentored, to "ask questions, observe, try, do and ask more questions". By attending this seminar I learnt how similar the U.S. model is to our own Women in Gliding Week in Australia, it shares the same format as well as the organisational requirements and challenges. In talking to Neita about the seminars, one of the biggest challenges is that the organisational committee can change on a regular basis and as a result the experience and knowledge of running the seminar may be lost from year to year especially if the organiser did not attend the seminar in the preceding year. Neita mentioned that her goal before retiring as International President is to write a Seminar Procedures Manual. I mentioned that I had recently created one as we suffer from the same issues and we were very close to cancelling the Women in Gliding Week 2013 event in January due to the organising committee quitting at the last minute. I have put together a simple checklist to pass on to future organisers to give them guidance and hopefully ensure the success of future events.

The WSPA seminar confirmed my own beliefs on the importance of an event where women can get together, share ideas, inspire each other and most importantly fly in a non-threatening environment. It cannot be stressed enough how role models can also encourage female pilots to fly more often and to stretch their flying abilities further. At the New Mexico seminar there were more cross country flights than in past years' seminars, women earned more badges than usual and a U.S. National Feminine Record was set.

This year at Moriarty 29-30 active pilots attended. The smallest attendance at a seminar was around 12 but the seminar goes ahead as normal regardless of numbers. Black Forest, Colorado was actually held at two gliderports because of the large numbers, The Reno, Nevada seminar in 2010 had 72 people attending including 48 glider pilots.

WSPA make a point of having the date and place of future seminars set up two or more years in advance so that women can plan. They have also made a point of examining the dates of seminars. These measures, in addition to subsidising two attendees, have brought in an increase in attendance. The 2014 Seminar will be held in York, Canada, July 21-25. The 2015 seminar will be in Minden, Nevada June 15-19 and they are looking to hold a seminar abroad in 2016.

WSPA Communication

Other ways that WSPA encourages females in gliding is via communication.

- Neita is diligent in sending out emails. She has her own database but is keen to reinstate the WSPA Website function that allowed her to send out broadcast emails as she feels that communication has suffered as a result (this has recently been achieved)
- The WSPA Website
- The current Forum on the www.womensoaring.org website is not widely used, but the weblist, recently established by the Seminar Coordinator is up and working. WSPA makes an effort to only send information that promotes events, scholarships and awards. All other information is handled by the Newsletter
- Soaring Café is a new PR tool the WSPA uses and soon there will be an article on offered scholarships and on the upcoming seminars
- WSPA have a newsletter called 'Hangar Soaring' which is very informative and goes out quarterly to members, to the SSA, to various gliderports and gliding organisations around the world
- WSPA regularly advertises its activities, its scholarships and winners, the Anne Morrow Lindbergh Trophy for the longest distance of a member who applies in the SSA magazine 'Soaring' as well as in 'Gliding International'. Occasionally articles appear in the German soaring magazine and their international Board Member, Dani Cerne from Slovenia, represents the WSPA at various women pilots' events in Europe.
- WSPA surveyed all women soaring pilots many years ago and received valuable insights to the female glider pilot demographic at that time

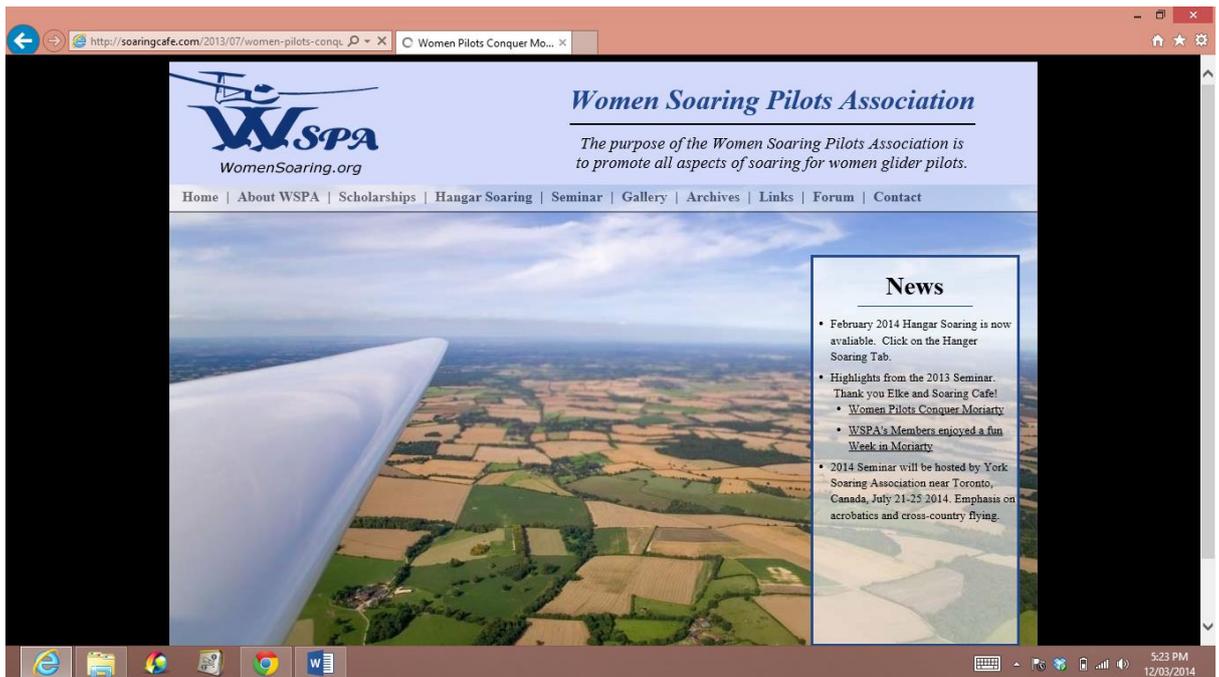


Figure 1 - WSPA Website

WSPA is a success because no one individual is responsible for running all aspects of the organisation. The WSPA Board of Directors includes;

- President - includes SSA Liaison and Records
- Vice President - includes Seminar Coordinator and Public Relations (PR) Committee
- Secretary - includes AML Trophy Committee
- Treasurer
- Three board members-at-large includes one international representative

In addition to the Board of Directors there are ten committees that look after:

- AML Trophy and Records
- Bylaws and newly established Standing Rules Committee that created a document that guides committees as to their roles and their calendar items
- Finance
- Fundraising and Development
- Investment
- Membership
- Nominating
- Public Relations (includes Webmaster and Hangar Soaring Newsletter)
- Scholarship
- Seminar Coordinator

Neita said that the U.S. government does not assist at all, unlike much of Europe, where governments subsidise training, gliderports and runways. The American gliding community is proactive in raising money for scholarships and many individuals personally develop young talent by way of:

- Experiment Aircraft Association (EAA) started the Young Eagles Program where any young person between the ages of 7 and 17 who call up gets a free flight (Neita has personally done over 200 flights and though she also continually hands out WSPA cards and offers a free flight, not many have taken the opportunity but she says you never know if it will spur someone to try gliding at some point in their lives)
- The Civil Air Patrol (similar to cadets) at Air Sailing, Reno, Nevada pays scholarships to assist pilots to solo and supports those who are dedicated to finishing off their training to license. In twelve years about six pilots have achieved this. All glider ports are different and offer various scholarships.

The 1972 Survey

While in America I was fortunate to also get in touch with Bertha Ryan who was responsible for the first WSPA newsletter which came out in 1972. There were 57 female glider pilots in America at this time and in the 1972 newsletter it contained the results of a survey which was distributed by the SSA to clubs and commercial operations and went only to women SSA members.

In the 1972 survey to the SSA female members included questions such as;

- Marital status? – Most indicated Mrs as opposed to Ms or Miss
- State?
- Are they involved in commercial gliding activities?
- What glider rating and power license do they have plus hours of each?
- What badges have they attained?
- What records do they hold?
- What competition experience do they have?
- What competitions are they interested in competing in?
- What records are they interested in holding?
- What is their profession? Interestingly most indicated housewife and/or Mother and/or Crew.

This was the second survey sent out by the SSA, the first was very similar and went out to the entire SSA membership. The results of the first survey showed that a rather large majority of members were in engineering and scientific fields. Bertha thought that “perhaps this is to be expected as much of soaring is somewhat technical i.e. understanding aerodynamics, meteorology, instrumentation, etc.”

It would be interesting to send a similar questionnaire now, Bertha suspects that the replies would be very different “in this country (maybe yours too), there is an effort to interest women in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, math). I believe the number of women in these fields has grown somewhat in the last 40 or so years. Similarly for flying in general and gliding in particular, but not as fast as women going into other fields (and sports), for example, attorneys and doctors”. Surveys reflect the demographic of glider pilots at a particular moment time, the typical glider pilot

forty years ago is very different from a glider pilot today. By understanding more about our female glider pilot demographic we are better equipped to target our marketing, training and resources.

Neita notes that she and her husband teach a module called “Instructing the female Student” for their CFI candidates. Specific issues covered involve communications (manner of speech, tone, addressing the student, position in talking, manner of correction), reading the student and recognising problems. Female students do not always learn in the same manner as male students.

Female Gliding in Canada – York Gliding Club

Although I did not travel to Canada, there were a few participants who attended the WSPA seminar. One of which was Eva Dillon, CFI of the York Gliding Club, just outside of Toronto in Canada.

York gliding club has approximately 100 members with about 12 female members, 3 of which are instructors, this is an impressive 12% female membership. York Soaring club achieved this great result by;

- York Soaring club has always had a very strong focus on training juniors and the club gets a large amount of cadets each year in groups of about 20 of which roughly 3 are usually girls
- The founder of the club although amazing in his vision for training failed to see the necessity in providing amenities, in the early days there were no showers, and the cadets amazingly slept in an old chicken coop. The decision was made to update the facilities and build cabins. This has made the club a lot more appealing to women
- An airline in China sends over groups of approximately 20 at a time to train, a percentage being women trainees
- The club has females in key roles, such as the CFI and instructors who assist trainees with any problems that may arise. Like most clubs often there are some on the instructor panel that are retired gentlemen who are not necessarily doing it because instructing is their passion (it may have been once) but because it is something to fill in their days. This can lead to complacency and even failure to see issues that a trainee may have. I.e. Simple things like how women fit into a glider, may make some gliders easier to fly for women than others
- Twenty scholarships of \$500 are offered each year. Juniors don't have the finances to fly while at school or college, the scholarship allows them to continue to fly during this time. In return for the scholarship recipients are required to do a certain number of hours' volunteer work at the club.

The United States of America - Lessons for WIG Australia

1. Success depends on sharing the load
2. We are on the right track with our Women in Gliding Week
3. Regular communication is imperative
4. Sponsorships encourage all levels of female glider pilots, not only directly but also by creating role models
5. Survey female members
6. Incorporate “Instructing the Female Student” into the standard instructor training syllabus

Female Gliding in the United Kingdom

The first thing that struck me when I started to talk about women in gliding in the United Kingdom was that everyone I spoke with was so enthusiastic. My first contact in the UK was with Liz Sparrow, women's world number one (currently number 3) and also cofounder of Women Glide UK. There are currently about 8000 glider pilots in the UK with just over 5% women. This is not a high percentage but what is surprising is the number of women competing at a high level. Seven qualified for women's worlds and two for the Euro worlds. It is this elite group that have banded together to promote and encourage women in gliding via the creation of Women Glide UK.

Women Glide UK

The Women's Development Initiative has been around since 2005, run by members of the British Women's Gliding Team, its objective is to encourage more women into competition flying and specifically into international competition. In 2012 the initiative was renamed Women Glide UK (WGUK) and a Facebook page was created to communicate to the wider women pilot community with the aim of getting more women doing more gliding.

- WGUK's fundamental belief is that gliding is a sport where men and women compete on equal terms, but because there are so few women in gliding there is a need for role-modelling and encouragement to ensure women fulfil this potential. WGUK want to see more women in gliding and believe that achieving this is core to British Gliding Association (BGA) business
- WGUK's focus and expertise is at the 'top end' helping committed pilots to improve their flying, encouraging them to compete and increasing their confidence and performance in competitions
- WGUK will work alongside the British Gliding Association to complement rather than duplicate any BGA initiatives to get more women into gliding
- WGUK will actively seek to make their programme complementary to the Junior's development initiative to provide maximum coverage for up and coming competition pilots.
- WGUK will develop links with women glider pilots worldwide

WGUK understand that they are at the top end of gliding and hope to be the 'top slice' of a pyramid that then cascades knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm down to the wider women's movement.

There are three focus areas of WGUK activity:

1. **Get more women flying competitions:** WGUK aims to offer encouragement and training to increase participation in competition flying by:
 - Holding at least one ground-school day each winter with pundit speakers and objectives setting. It is open to all glider pilots but designed at a level suitable for those who are getting into competition flying
 - Running training weekends such as the Compette
 - Offering coaching/mentoring at rated competitions

None of the above initiatives are limited to women, all pilots are welcome – but the main focus of promotional activity will be to women.

2. **Develop a Women's squad:** The aim is to implement a coaching plan with the following key features:
 - A squad giving continuity of training for the top pilots, not just the Worlds team
 - A continuing coaching plan, where those in the squad work on improving their skills regardless of whether it is a Worlds year or not
 - Squad coaching weekends where technical flying specifics are targeted and coached after which pilots can go away and work on embedding those specifics
 - Team coaching weekend early in Worlds year to work on team flying issues

3. **Cascade to the wider women pilots' community in order to raise the profile, confidence and expectations of women gliding in UK**
 - Encourage wider participation, networking and development of community spirit among women glider pilots through social media such as the Women Glide UK blog and Facebook page
 - Make the initiative visible through the production of WGUK gear etc.
 - Run Women Flying days (like what is done at Dunstable and Bicester) to get more women in the air
 - Work with the next slice down to manage/promote the cascade

We need to crawl before we walk. It would be fabulous to one day be able to offer all three focus areas of WGUK activity in Australia but to get more women flying competitions and to develop a Women's squad we first need to focus on the wider women pilots' community in order to raise the profile, confidence and expectations of women gliding in Australia.

By looking at each of the initiatives of this particular focus area individually Women in Gliding Australia can learn by their the UK example

- Encourage wider participation, networking and development of community spirit among women glider pilots through social media such as the Women Glide UK blog and Facebook page

A Women Glide (UK) Blog has been setup for posts longer than Facebook - so all material on task planning, inspirational stuff etc. go on this site. The Women Glide (UK) Facebook page has over 270 likes and is updated on a daily basis and the Women's Gliding Page on the BGA news website is also updated regularly by the BGA publicity person.

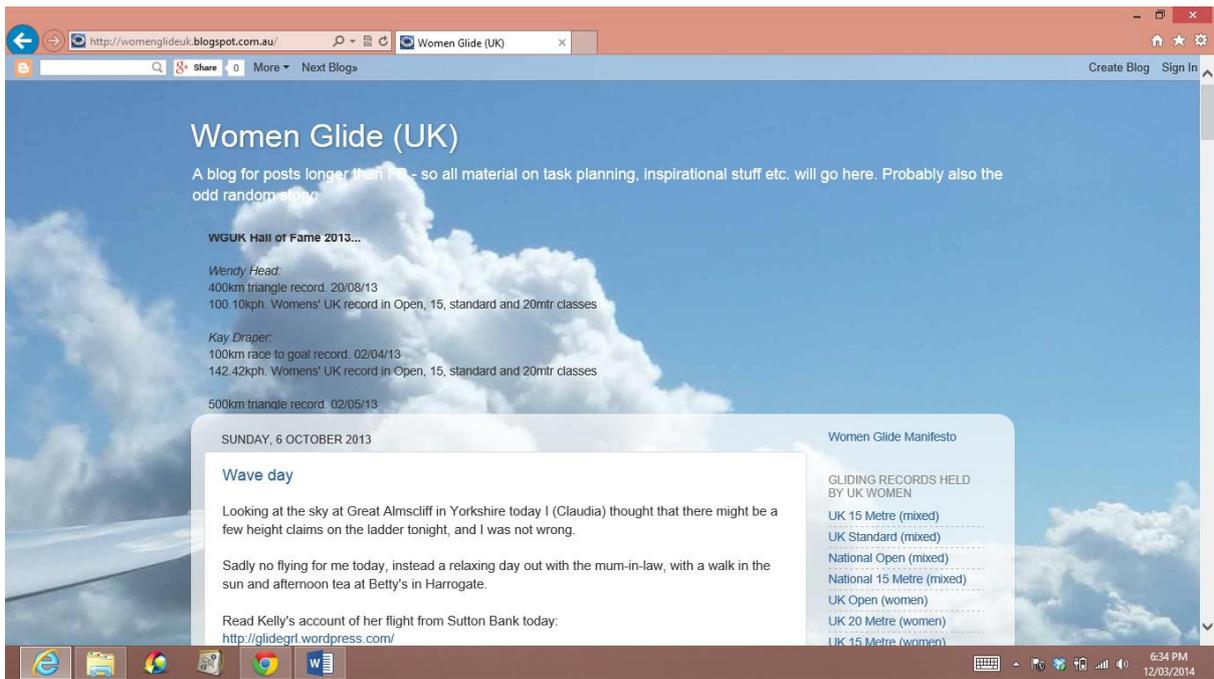


Figure 2 - Women Glide UK Blog



Figure 3 – Women Glide UK Facebook Page

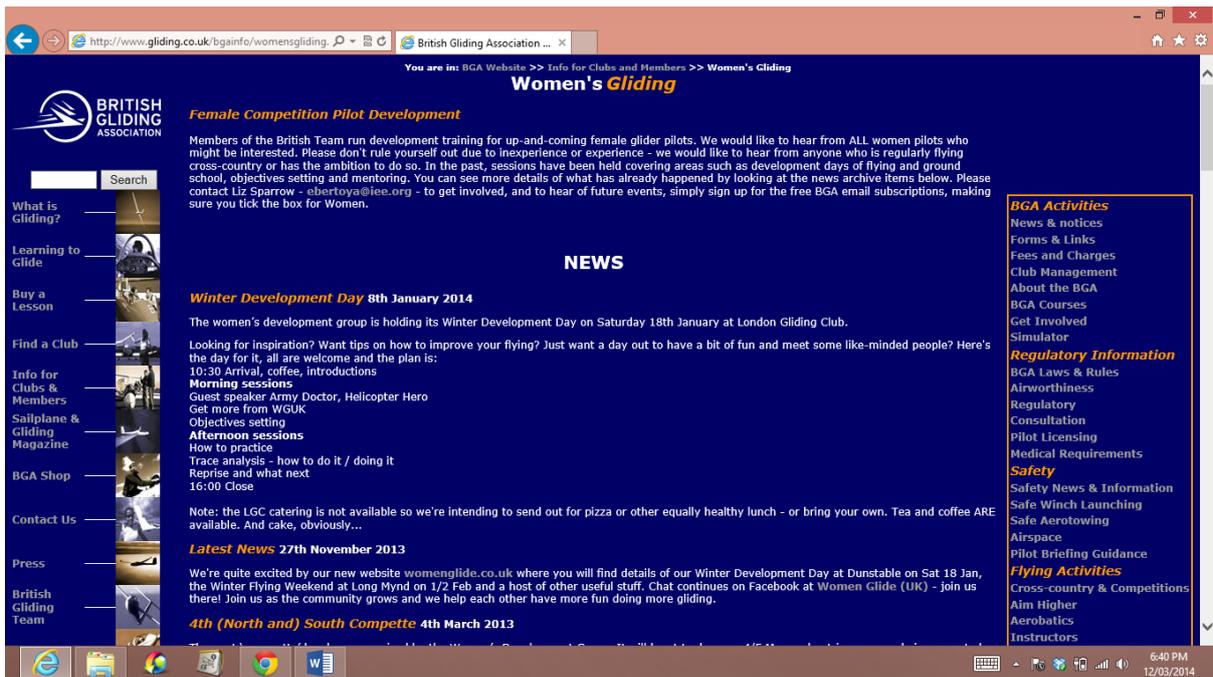


Figure 4 - Women's Gliding Page on the BGA Website

- Make the initiative visible through the production of WGUK gear etc.

Women Glide (UK) has produced a shirt that is in demand worldwide and is a fabulous way to promote women in gliding.

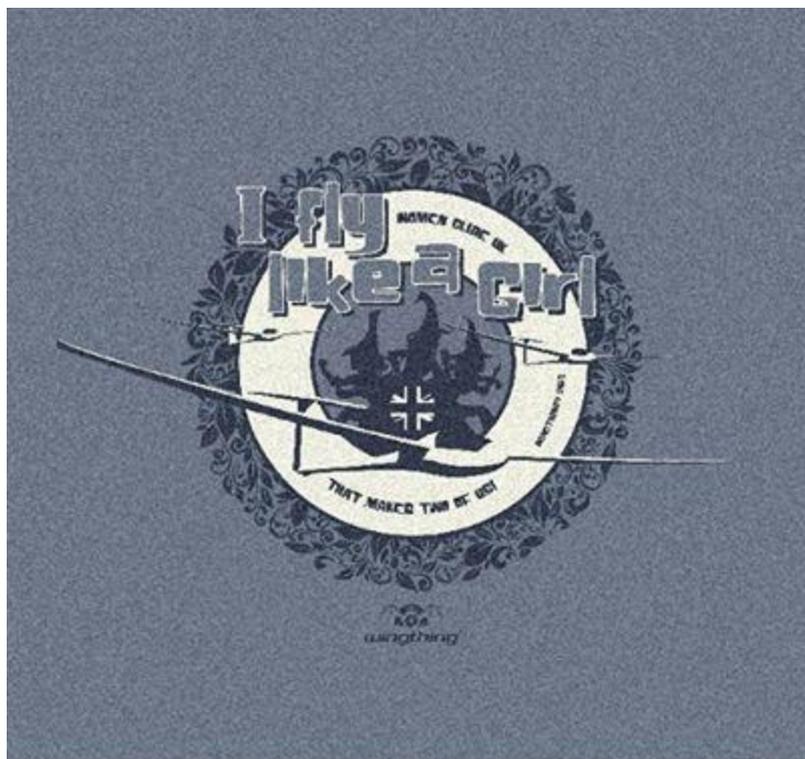


Figure 5 - Women Glide UK Logo



Figure 6 - Women Glide UK Clothing

- Run Women Flying days (like is done at Dunstable and Bicester) to get more women in the air

Women's events are currently done on a club by club basis. They are advertised on the internet as well as locally. The day encourages all male members to invite and bring women to the club and fly as well as enticing women to try the sport for the first time.

Dunstable 3rd August 2013

GIRLS GET GLIDING

Following the enormous success of our previous GGG days, we are holding Girls Get Gliding 6 this year on **Saturday August 3rd**

Every year we set one day aside with the specific aim of encouraging greater female participation in the world of aviation, and in our sport of gliding, by coming to fly with us at a discounted rate.

You can book a trial lesson, consisting of a ground briefing, and 15-20 minutes in the air while you learn how to use the glider's basic controls (under the watchful eye of your instructor). Or if you prefer you can just sit back and enjoy the spectacular views while you familiarise yourself with the joy of moving effortlessly through the air. Trial flights are charged at the discounted rate of £60.

Or you can book a one-day-course, comprising a full briefing and three flights spread over the day, at the end of which you will be far further along the path of learning to fly. And you get your own log book. One-day-courses have been discounted to £150.

Costs of trial flights and courses include three months' membership of the club, should you wish to continue your training at a later date.

Please call either Amanda or Kay in the office to book a lesson or course, 01582 663419, or email reception@londonglidingclub.co.uk.



"Bicester birds 2013" - A day for women gliding!

Bicester Gliding Centre offer flights for 30 members of the public (20mins motor glider or 2000ft aero tow) for a bargain price of £45! The day is designed to entice women to give it a try and also to encourage existing glider pilots to come along "If you are female and have always wanted to try gliding, book now! Already a glider pilot? Bring yourself, bring your aircraft or just join us for a drink in the evening!"



- Work with the next slice down to manage/promote the cascade

By forming a committee the workload is less daunting for each individual. This encourages more women to get involved. As seen by the UK example where there are a lot of women taking part in WGUK the work is no longer tedious but fun.

Women Glide UK appears to be working, last summer the UK had more women flying in competitions than ever before and for the first time ever they already have more people qualified than the maximum six that can attend the Worlds in 2013. For the first time, in 2013 half of the mixed team flying the Unflapped Europeans will be women. The current (2013) world number one female glider pilot is a UK pilot. This summer WGUK are running development weekends, a couple of weekend competitions as well as mentoring at national and regional competitions.

WGUK have identified the need to set up the following key elements to develop and move forward;

- A structure
- A committee
- An annual meeting
- A bank account/accounts.
(Women Glide UK Manifesto, 2013)

In addition to the initiatives outlined above WGUK are considering;

- Formalising the organisation to make it is easier to get funding
- Set up a charitable entity
- Charge a small amount to join e.g. £10-20 and get free registration to WGUK events (this has now been done and appears to be successful)

The BGA does not currently have a formal women's representative role however the group of competition pilots that have created and grown Women Glide UK has done an outstanding job of promoting women in gliding. The BGA do however contract the services of a Development officer one day per week, Alison Randle, who has a varied role in that includes;

- Supporting clubs with non-operational activities including: policies; governance; project planning & funding; schemes for membership recruitment and retention; dealing with threats to security of tenure of their gliding sites
- Assisting Women Glide UK including the creation of their Facebook page
- Organises an annual Club management conference with sessions for Chairmen, Treasurers and CFIs
- Alison is also the Voluntary Chairman of the European Gliding Union (EGU) Club Development Working Group.

The European Gliding Union

The European Gliding Union (EGU) is the association of European Gliding Federations or Gliding Sections of National Aero Clubs. Its aim is to represent the interests of all glider pilots in Europe with respect to regulatory affairs. EGU monitors the developments in European aviation regulation and when necessary, takes action to prevent unfavourable or even dangerous rules affecting our sport from being set up. They are also working towards a standardised universal European aviation system of standardising policies, procedures, regulations etc. The EGU meets once per year with an average of fourteen countries represented (all EU countries plus Norway & Switzerland) and counts twenty full members and represents more than 80,000 glider pilots. The structure of the annual meetings comprise of one day focused on development and the remaining two days on licensing & regulations. (European Gliding Union Website)

In addition to its work in government relations, the European Gliding Union (EGU) engages in analysis and outreach on a variety of gliding topics. At this year's Workshop on Club Development, authors Alison Randle, Arne Wangsholm, Claus Nedergaard Jacobsen, and Robert Danewid

presented their analyses and views regarding the challenges gliding clubs face in attracting, serving, and keeping members. The questions asked are the same worldwide;

- Why don't people fly more?
- Why do glider pilots stop gliding?
- How can we keep them?
- How can we recruit more of them?

The European Union glider numbers are reducing, until recently this was also the case in Australia. If the EGU would allow an Australian representative to attend the Development meetings it would be mutually beneficial.

BGA Development

Similar to Australia, each region in the UK seeks government funding. The BGA development officer assists Gliding clubs in the UK by conducting BGA management meetings. It is encouraged that the appropriate management of all clubs get involved e.g. CFI, treasurer etc. so that operations and management in each club work together. Approximately 150 people attend three sessions on one day. The group is broken up to allow similar clubs talk together and discuss issues, potential ideas etc.

Alison likes the way similar meetings are set up in Scandinavia; they fly on the Friday, business on Saturday, a Saturday night dinner, Sunday morning business then everyone departs. This setup creates camaraderie among the participants. One of the key messages that Alison is trying to convey in these meetings is that each "club committee is nominated on behalf of the club, it is not their club". Culture is a very important aspect of any club and only by having a progressive friendly club open to new ideas that clubs can prosper.

The BGA website also contains information for clubs and management e.g. sample documents that can be modified for individual clubs e.g.

<http://www.gliding.co.uk/bgainfo/clubmanagement/policies.htm> and www.juniorgliding.co.uk

which is a resource for clubs who are already, or are in the process of becoming, a BGA accredited junior gliding centre.

The United Kingdom - Lessons for WIG Australia

1. Encourage more women to fly in competitions via coaching, training and mentoring
2. Develop a Women's Squad
3. Start a Women in Gliding Australia Facebook page and encourage activity
4. Recreate the Women in Gliding Link Page on the GFA Website
5. Set up a WIG committee to share the load
6. Encourage individual clubs to hold a Ladies Weekend Event
7. Develop a WIG clothing range with a catchy logo like 'I fly like a girl' i.e. 'Aussie Soaring birds', 'Chicks with Wings'
8. Get a representative onto the EGU

Female Gliding in France

The Centre National de Vol à Voile

The Centre National de Vol à Voile (CNVV) at Saint Auban was the next stop on my itinerary where I had arranged an interview with the Gliding Development Officer (Directeur Technique National Adjoint (development)), Jean-Nicolas Barelier. Jean-Nicolas is employed by the French government to develop gliding, encompassing training, youth education, development for the handicap and women, to raise awareness of careers in aviation, and to secure the financial support for gliding in France. While also at Saint Auban I had the opportunity to meet with Luc Guillot Director of Centre National de Vol à Voile (CNVV) and Director Federation Francaise de Vol a Voile (FFVV) which is equivalent to the GFA.

At the time of my visit France had 10,000 glider pilots, 700 women (7%) the highest of all countries visited. Since the end of 2013 women accounted for 10% of the gliding population thanks to the new 'discovery members' concept (3 to 6 days of flying a year) of which 20% are women.

French Government funding for development initiatives

The French Government puts a high priority on sports funding. The funding proposal put forward is the same for all sports whereby gliding gets €800,000 per year. This pays for the CNVV, training, instructor training (FI) courses, management courses, development tools, special club supports, Regional Technical Advisers etc.

The CNVV is a centre for excellence, it has top gliders and offers top instructors, and the CNVV also operates as a fully registered Vocational Training Centre for instructors and mechanics. The CNVV & FFVV follow 65 pilots and recommend that they spend a minimum of one week per year at the centre, this is provided free of charge. Included in the top 65 French pilots about half are juniors. The centre is also opened to every pilot who would like to improve their level and enjoyment of mountain flying, with or without instructors.

The list of facilities offered by the CNVV are endless;

- Approximately 100 accommodation rooms
- Restaurant
- Pool
- Tennis
- 2 simulators
- Approximately 13 x 2 seaters, and 22 single seat gliders. The national team have their own aircraft paid for by the government, the province and FFVV
- A steam room
- A gym
- Private meeting rooms

Jean-Nicolas has identified three areas that need focus to improve the participation of women in gliding;

1. Improved buildings and facilities (Most clubs have no childcare, no accommodation, often rough and dirty facilities)

2. A cultural change (away from the current male atmosphere)
3. Recognition that women have a different attitude to gliding

The first two areas are the clubs responsibility but Jean-Nicolas has created the Discovery Program which has been very successful in appealing to the female psyche and their approach to gliding.

The Discovery Program



The FFVV have created the Discovery Program which focuses on the enjoyment of taking a flight and **not forcing training**. This program has been very successful in boosting female numbers.

Over 1,500 people have participated in the program since the start of 2013 and a 9% conversion rate has been identified. The success has been contributed to a number of factors;

- Different options up to 6 flights on any day during the year
- Starts with brochures sent to clubs, sport offices and tourist offices
- When someone comes to fly they get a passport where the details of the flight are written
- Participants get a certificate when they complete all flights
- Out of 162 clubs in France, 119 currently participate

How it works

Jean-Nicolas has trained regional committee members, they in turn are responsible to train the clubs. Each club sends one or two people for a two day training course then the idea is that they train the instructors/club committee back at their club at a one day course. Jean-Nicolas also offers different training for different demographics e.g. women, juniors etc. Also available to clubs are videos and slides based on the discovery and enjoyment of gliding, **not lessons**. These are great for rainy days along with the use of simulators.

Over 1650 people have taken part in the discover program to date, 20% of people who take part in the Discovery Program are women with a 6% conversion rate. The total conversion of the discovery program is 9%. (The FFVV have a software program that it developed to look at a glance member statistics and also to email different groups).

Simulators

The FFVV are also responsible for the mass production of fifty gliding simulators for clubs. The cost to each club is €5500 plus software (e.g. condor). Clubs use the simulators for marketing, schools, training and for fun. The simulators have proven to be very successful.

View from the sky

Most women in gliding in France are young 17-23 years old. The View from the Sky Program is paid for by a separate aviation contract which is focused on Juniors and is a special program in schools. The aim is to promote aeronautic jobs and to demonstrate how gliding is a good grounding for a job in aviation.

Youth Support

It costs juniors under 25 approximately €700 to get license because of the support they receive. When they go solo they are given €150 and when they get their sail plane license they get another €200 and if they get their 1000km they receive an additional €200.

While in France I also met with Amélie Audier, currently on the French Junior and Women's teams. Amélie recently flew in the Women's World Gliding Championship at Issoudun, France. Her best results to date are 3rd in the French Junior Nationals in 2009 and 3rd at the Women's World Gliding Championship in Sweden in 2011.

Amelie is currently on the Pole Espoir (Hope for the Future) and commented that being selected among the 65 pilots followed by the CNVV and the FFVV is valuable in so many ways; coaching by world champion pilot, Eric Napoleon; the National Team and the Juniors fly together three weekends per month in the soaring season to bridge the gap in knowledge and experience; French national teams do not pay for the entry fees into world competitions; Having the opportunity to fly the high performance gliders reserved for the national team. These team gliders include;

- 4 Cirrus
- 1 Hornet
- 2 Ventus
- 2 Discus 2A
- 2 ASG29
- 2 JS1
- 1 Duo Discus
- Also an Arcus which is used by the CNVV

The CNVV run a juniors day once a year where 350 students come from within 100 km. There are lots of display stands where young people can learn about aviation including;

- Airworthiness
- Simulators

- Careers
- The FFVV
- Hand gliding
- Trial lessons

The French gliding federation proposes to the government every four years. The federation then distributes the money. In the proposal it covers aspects like;

- Juniors
- Fight instructors
- Disabled
- Safety
- Women
- Development of wining (environmental)
- Development of ultra-light tugs (environmental)

The Government also funds DTN (national training direction) which is separate funding by the government which includes eight employees who average €60,000 these include areas of sport as well as training and development. These employees have different backgrounds, 2 of them are not glider pilots, which gives a greater depth of knowledge to the sport.

Encouraging Women in Management Roles

The FFVV has a board of seven members, two are women (including deputy president). The FFVV committee has twenty one members, three are women. Approximately 3% of clubs have female presidents or instructors and approximately fifty women enter competitions. However Jean-Nicolas noted that only 3/80 new instructors are women, even though it is free to train as an instructor for women.

National day of gliding for Women 29th/30th June 2013

Approximately 450 women are encouraged to go gliding on this day by around 70 clubs which take part. The Airport location changes every year depending on where event is hosted and the Women's National Team assist to promote the event which includes;

- The use of simulators
- A conference
- Posters - what is gliding (provided by Jean-Nicolas to all clubs)
- Discounted rates

France – Lessons for WIG Australia

1. Lobby for more government funding for general development initiatives
2. Endorse free instructor training for women
3. Create an equivalent Discovery, View from the Sky and Hope for the Future programs
4. Encouraging Women in Management Roles
5. National day of gliding for Women

Female Gliding in Italy

My contact in Italy was Margherita Acquaderni Caraffini who is the new chairwoman of The Adele Orsi Flying Club (ACAO – Aero Club Adele Orsi), which is based at the Gliding Club of Calcinate del Pesce, on Lake Varese. The election of Margot (as she is known) marks a major change in the world of Italian gliding, which, for the first time in its long history, has a woman in charge of a club. Margot has an impressive gliding career with over 3300 flying hours, no fewer than 28 Italian records, and participation in six World Championships. I met with Margot to see how female gliding participation in Italy compares with the other countries I have visited. In a 2011 survey of female glider pilots it was revealed that there are approximately 60 female glider pilots in Italy. Although currently the number of female glider pilots in Italy is small, Margot is working hard to encourage female glider pilots and increase these numbers.

Background

Italian gliding has gone through an upheaval in recent years and is currently in a transition period. Gliding is now governed by the Italian Aero Club with the STS commission representing gliding within the larger framework. Italy is represented on the international Gliding Committee (IGC) and Varese will be hosting the next IGC meeting.

The Italian government provides only a small amount of subsidy for gliding which includes funding for international competitions. There are currently three females in the national team but Margot is concerned over the lack of women coming up the ranks. When Margot started competing there was one other woman for a few years which was her mentor but then for many years she was the only female to fly in Italian national competitions. Margot shares a similar view to many of the countries that I have visited in that role models play a critical part in encouraging female glider pilots to progress and succeed in the typically male dominated sport.

Fly Pink

Margot encourages communication amongst female pilots with her email mail list (currently thirty pilots), she was also instrumental in the creation of Fly Pink, a group designed with the purpose “to promote all aspects of soaring for women and to help women who wish to get closer to this wonderful sport”. (www.flypink.it, n.d.)

Fly Pink Events

Over one weekend each year there is a Fly Pink meeting, a national team meeting and a presidents meeting as well as safety seminars. These meetings are scheduled at different times and they are held at the Aero Club Adele Orsi.

Fly Pink have had two long weekend flying events, two years ago it was very successful with approximately twelve participants however last year it was less successful with around four. In September this year it was planned to have a Fly Pink event in France but disappointingly it had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers. The challenge that Margot is facing is similar to what we experienced at the last Women in Gliding Event in Adelaide, do we cancel due to lack of numbers or do we run the event regardless? With the organising committee quitting at the last minute and numbers not looking good the decision could have gone either way. Thankfully the host club stepped in to organise and it turned out to be a successful event. The numbers were smaller than usual but those that participated enjoyed the flying, the seminars and the wonderful camaraderie. My advice would be to run the events at a club where there is a number of female glider pilots. Even if the

number of participants is small the objective of the event will still be achieved i.e. where women can get together, share ideas, inspire each other and most importantly fly in a non-threatening environment.

Margot has recently updated me with news that at the end of June FLY PINK will have a 5 days stage in Ferrara and there are already pilots subscribed.

Fly Pink Facebook page

The Fly Pink Facebook page is incredibly successful, it has 420 likes and constant postings. The challenge for the newly created Australian Women in Gliding Facebook page is to promote regular activity by encouraging all girls to post their latest achievements plus anything of interest to glider pilots in general.



Figure 7 – Fly Pink Facebook

Fly Pink Website

As an extension to the Fly Pink Facebook page the Fly Pink Website is excellent in promoting women in gliding. The content includes;

- A home page
- Profiles of female glider pilots in Italy and the gliding club that they are a member of
- The history of female gliding
- News
- Gallery
- Publications including YouTube videos and articles
- Shop for clothing, books and wine

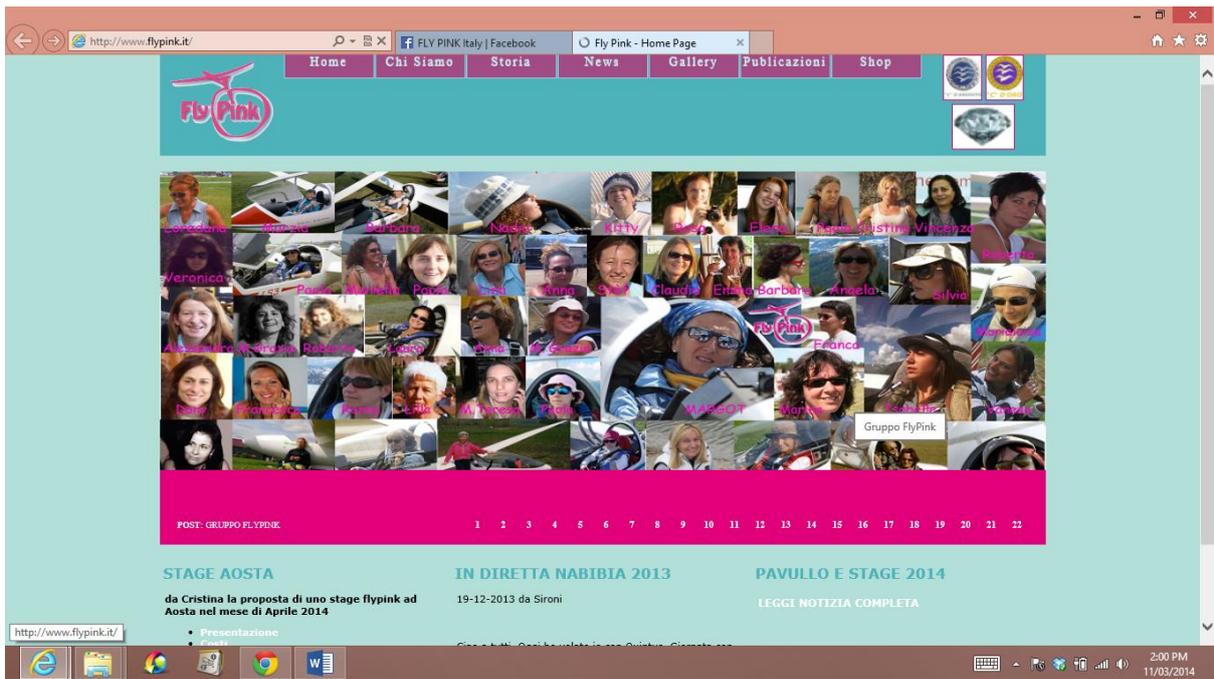


Figure 8 – Fly Pink Website

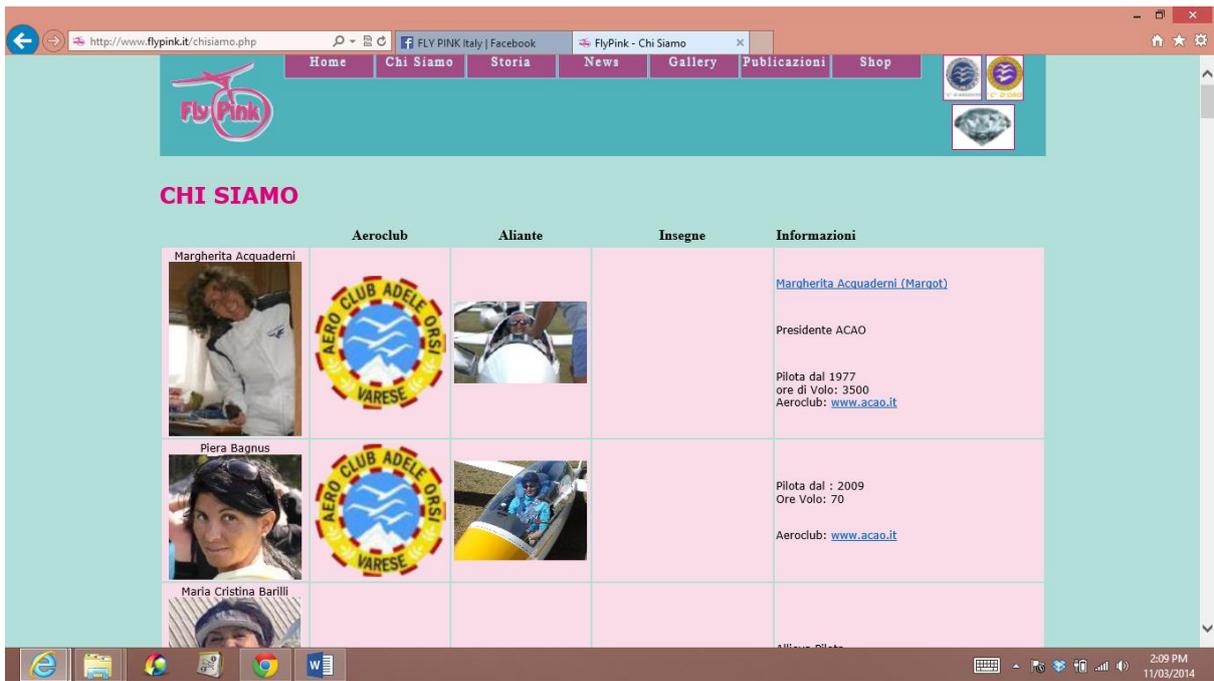


Figure 9 - Fly Pink Profiles

The History of International Gliding Contests, European and World Championships for Women.

Gill Van den Broeck wrote the original book about the History of Women Gliding Competitions in 2005 and subsequently translated it into English. "And now plenty of people will be able to know, see and understand the words of an eyewitness, the way women gliding competitions were born and developed" (Acquaderni). Margot has since organised and printed a second edition along with subsequent updates.

Margot very generously gave Women in Gliding Australia a copy, including updates, of The History of International Gliding Contests, European and World Championships for Women. It is my intention to take these books to future women in gliding events and thus share this important and inspirational gliding history with all of our Australian female pilots.

An Invitation to our National Gliding Teams

As chairwoman of the Aero Club Adele Orsi Margot would like to see her club promoted throughout the world as a base for international pilots to prepare and train in mountain flying conditions. Margot has extended the invitation to the Australian Gliding Teams to train at the Aero Club Adele Orsi.

Adele e Giorgio Orsi, Calcinate del Pesce, Varese, Italy (Aero Club Adele Orsi)

Aero Club Adele Orsi, which is based at the Gliding Club of Calcinate del Pesce, on Lake Varese is one of the largest clubs in Italy and a lot of training is conducted here. With over 200 members, the club has 7 tow planes, 5 ASK21's (including 1 self-launcher), 3 DG300's, 2 Duo Discus and 1 Single Astir. The club is perfectly located only 6.5km from Varese and 20 minutes from Malpensa international airport in Milan, the Italian Alps are within easy reach and in view of the Gliding Club over the picturesque Lake Varese.



Figure 10 - Province of Varese, Italy

The staff at the Aero Club Adele Orsi are very experienced in organising events. The airfield is the most important Italian Aero Club and has hosted high performance events, National Championships and a Qualifying Grand Prix in 2011 (it cannot host more than that due to its size). It is also the location where each spring there is Ultra Performance training, where the National team train up and coming pilots.

The club currently offers a high performance training week to twenty pilots and fifteen coaches at the beginning of April. One to one training is the focus (or a maximum one coach to two or three participants) and courses can be specially formulated for each participant. Each course can range from one to seven or more days.

Spring time is the best time of the year to fly in Varese with excellent thermal conditions over the Alps and the often strong north wind can mean wave flights are possible. The entry fee is 140 € for all participants which includes a temporary subscription to the club. Glider hire cost is either 170 € for the Duo Discus (including a coach) or 90 € for a private single seater. The current cost of an aero tow is 70 € to 1,000 m ASL. Unfortunately the only downside to the Aero Club Adele Orsi is the limited aircraft available to hire however with so many events happening in Australia over the next few years now is possibly a good time to set up reciprocal hire arrangements.



Figure 11 - Aero Club Adele Orsi



Figure 12 - Aero Club Adele Orsi on Lake Verase



Figure 13 - Flying in the Alps

The Australian Institute of Sport European Training Facility



On my arrival in Varese Margot arranged a meeting for me with the Australian Institute of Sport facility just five minutes' drive from the Aero Club Adele Orsi. The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) European Training Centre in Italy is a facility for all Australian elite athletes training and competing in Europe. The centre offers accommodation, sports science and sports medicine capabilities with access to the best facilities in the region

The list of facilities that the institute offers is impressive;

- 25 Ensuite bedroom with two beds per room
- Commercial kitchen
- A separate self-catering kitchen
- Dining hall
- TV room
- Internet access (including Wi-Fi)
- Laundry
- Recovery pools
- Medical and physiotherapy treatment rooms
- Change facilities
- Sports science laboratory
- Performance analysis room
- Study area
- Lockable rooms for gear storage
- Bulk storage
- Visiting teams administration area
- On-site administration support
- Games room

Staffed by a mix of Australian and Italian sporting professionals the facility can offer a range of additional services including catering, coordination of self-drive vehicles etc. (AIS 2013/14 brochure).



Figure 14 - AIS Gym



Figure 15 - AIS Gym



Figure 16 - AIS Briefing Room



Figure 17 - AIS TV Room



Figure 18 - AIS Ensuite Room



Figure 19 - AIS Kitchen



Figure 20 - AIS Pools

Italy – Lessons for WIG Australia

1. Encourage more people to post on the Women in Gliding Facebook Page
2. Recreate the Women in Gliding link on the GFA Website and update profiles
3. Assist the Australian National Gliding Teams to use the Aero Club Adele Orsi and the AIS facility in Varese to improve performance and promote our team members as role models

Conclusion

The countries that I visited are just small segment of the international gliding community but it is my hope that this report spreads to all gliding nations, opening the lines of communication, and resulting in greater knowledge and further ideas to grow the sport of gliding.

In speaking with the key people at the forefront of promoting Women in Gliding from The United States of America, England, France and Italy it highlighted above all the fact that we all share the same concerns;

- How do we increase our female membership?
- How do we retain our female membership?
- How do we encourage females to progress in gliding and become role models?

There is not one magic solution to these concerns however to develop Women in Gliding in Australia I believe all the ideas gathered from around the world offer potential;

1. Success depends on sharing the load
2. We are on the right track with our Women in Gliding Week
3. Regular communication is imperative
4. Sponsorships encourage all levels of female glider pilots, not only directly but also by creating role models
5. Survey female GFA members
6. Incorporate "Instructing the Female Student" into the standard instructor training syllabus
7. Focus on Juniors
8. Encourage upgrades to club facilities
9. Encouraging Women in Management Roles
10. Start a Women in Gliding Australia Facebook page (done)
11. Set up a WIG committee to share the load
12. Encourage individual clubs to hold a Ladies Weekend Event
13. Develop a WIG clothing range with a catchy logo like the UK's 'I fly like a girl' i.e. 'Aussie Soaring birds', 'Chicks with Wings'
14. Encourage more activity on Facebook
15. Get a representative onto the European Gliding Union
16. Lobby for more government funding for general development in initiatives
17. Endorse free Instructor training for women
18. Create an equivalent Discovery, View from the Sky and Hope for the Future programs
19. National day of gliding for Women
20. Recreate the Women in Gliding link on the GFA Website and update profiles
21. Assist the Australian National Gliding Teams to use the Aero Club Adele Orsi and the AIS facility in Varese to improve performance and promote our team members as role models

In looking at what different countries are doing to support women in gliding we must also recognise the positive efforts here in Australia. The Women in Gliding Event has seen success year after year, it is a formula that works. We have great role models, from our female GFA president through to some fabulous competition pilots and juniors. Our Facebook page is in its infancy but hopefully with increased awareness and a little encouragement it will take off. We now have a lot more ideas to try but one thing to remember is that ideas come to nothing without one essential ingredient.....enthusiasm. Achieving our goal of increasing female participation in gliding cannot be done by one person alone and whatever strategies are in place we must remember that they will never succeed without determination, hard work and a positive attitude.