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130 Years of Hang Gliding in Scotland: 1895 to 2025



The first successful, controlled, heavier than air flights that took place in the UK happened near Helensburgh, Scotland, in 1895. Percy Pilcher's pioneering flights were made from fields above Cardross, in a portable glider he called The Bat (above, left). He hung in the wooden frame of the Bat from his armpits, and limited control was achieved by swinging his body forward and back (for pitch) and from side to side for direction. After the Wright brothers' successful demonstration in 1903 of a powered aircraft at Kitty Hawk, almost all developments in aviation were directed towards powered aeroplanes and greater speed. It wasn't until the late 1960s that the simple aerofoil ideas that Francis and Gertrude Rogallo had first patented in 1948 were adapted to develop lightweight portable wings, which came to be known as hang gliders. Current designs no longer require the multiplicity of wire bracing that Pilcher used, but they are still controlled by moving the pilot's weight (now suspended in a harness below the wing, rather than from the oxters) through the use of a triangular control frame. The glider pictured above right is an Avian Cheetah EVO2, manufactured in Derbyshire, and represents the modern state-of-the-art, incorporating aluminium, carbon fibre, and stainless steel structural elements and a Dacron sail.

Angus Pinkerton first encountered the idea of a hang glider in 1975 while studying Aeronautical Engineering at Glasgow University. His experience being wholly theoretical until February 1979, when he spent most of his first hang gliding lesson sheltering from snow showers behind a training glider on the Tinto hills. Despite this inauspicious start, he was captivated by this form of free flight, and was lucky to be learning during the most rapid period of hang glider development. Angus became involved in the safety aspects of the sport, and has been the chairman of the Safety and Training Committee of the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association since 1985. He was awarded the FAI Paul Tissandier Diploma for his contribution to hang gliding safety in 1994.



Angus's talk will describe some of the early experimental gliders, discuss the development of the "Rogallo/Dickinson" wings of the 1960s, and bring this up to date with modern hang glider designs, illustrated with some of his own flights in Scotland. He will also explain how the strength and stability of lightweight flexible aircraft can be tested.

Register
[In Person](#)
or
[Online](#)

**6.30pm Tuesday 23rd Sept
Sept 2025**
Hybrid event
Please forward to your colleagues



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CPD Certificates available

