

Silent 2 Electro, by Andy Aveling



I recently had the opportunity to fly the Silent 2 Electro courtesy of Allan Arthurs, the UK representative for Alisport SRL, the Italian manufacturers of this interesting aircraft. Having made the flight, I felt it was appropriate to share my thoughts about it. So here's my take on this interesting little machine.

Rigging the Silent was a delight, with none of the usual issues associated with more traditional aircraft. It's incredibly light and easy to rig. Each wing panel weighs just 33kg! All the flying controls connect automatically. The two batteries weigh in at 15.5kg each and are secured just behind the cockpit – very close to the centre of gravity. Ground handling was a breeze; with an empty weight of about 200 kg the glider is easily manoeuvred by just one person.

The usual glider pre-flight check was entirely familiar, apart from the flaps, which are geared to the tail plane. The horizontal stabilizer is trimmed automatically, according to the flap setting, but more on this later.



Naturally the real item of interest was the electric motor! Control couldn't have been simpler. Turn the key-switch and rotate the power knob clockwise and presto! Instant, variable power! The folding propeller simply reacts to the centripetal forces. So, following a briefing and demonstration from Allan, I was accelerating purposefully down the runway. A short ground run and an impressive rate of climb of six knots afforded me the chance to reduce power soon after getting airborne. Conveniently,

I contacted the first thermal at about 800 ft. So it seemed like no time at all before I was ready to dispense with the power altogether. This simply involves turning the power knob anticlockwise, until the prop stops and the automatic brake parks the prop along the nose. Circling was lively with the aircraft loaded toward the aft of its C of G range. Although it felt perfectly safe and controllable I did feel the need to fly the aircraft whilst circling. More experience on type (or a more central C of G) would resolve this. Between thermals, the flap/trim system worked well, very similar to conventional flapped aircraft in fact. I was particularly impressed with the performance in the speed flap setting. The glider settled nicely at some 80+ knots and delivered a very flat glide, it didn't feel like flying a small glider. After an hour of local soaring in a brisk wind, I returned for a landing. The airbrakes were powerful and responsive, making for easy approach control. Landing was straightforward and after a sensible ground run, I powered up to complete a touch and go. Again, lift-off and climb were seamless and before long I was happily soaring away again. I returned a while later for a full-stop landing. Post flight analysis revealed that just 20% of the available battery power had been used for the two take-offs. Very impressive by any standards.

In summary, my impression is that this would be a great little aircraft for those that want total independence, perhaps in a remote area. At the claimed performance figures, it should be very capable of carrying pilots around 300km or more, even here in the UK. However, with any appreciable wind, it would certainly have to be flown at the heavy end of its weight range. What this fun little machine does demonstrate is an interesting way forward for glider propulsion. Certainly, the other glider manufacturers are slowly waking up to this fact.

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