

The Avon HG & PG Club Magazine



Avon

April 2003

Avon HGPG Club Committee Contacts

Name	Job	Home Phone	Work Phone	Mobile Phone	E-Mail
Tim Pentreath	Chairman	01225 832922	01761 234708	07905 271114	chairman@avonhgpg.co.uk
Alex Coltman	Safety Officer	01179 258405			safety@avonhgpg.co.uk
Robin Brown	Sites Officer (N)	01453 827202		0973 844449	sitesnorth@avonhgpg.co.uk
Stafford Evans	Sites Officer Overall	01225 404063		07748 145712	sites@avonhgpg.co.uk
Tony Moore	Membership Secretary	01980 594455	02380 316569	07818 000987	membership@avonhgpg.co.uk
	HG Low Air Time				hgla@avonhgpg.co.uk
Cathy Lawrence	Nova Editor	01985 214579		07799 776260	nova@avonhgpg.co.uk or editor@avonhgpg.co.uk
Hamish Atkinson	Webmaster	01380 723844	0800 195 9861	07970 504408	webmaster@avonhgpg.co.uk , news@avonhgpg.co.uk or gallery@avonhgpg.co.uk
Paul Ellis	Treasurer			07966 371535	
Garry Mitchell	Librarian	01373 472242		0780 1179917	library@avonhgpg.co.uk
Rich Harding	PG Low Air Time	0117 971 9380		0966 491138	pgla@avonhgpg.co.uk
Neil Atkinson	HG Competitions	01264 323813	01476 457240	0771 4159356	hgcomps@avonhgpg.co.uk
Martin Stanton	PG Competitions	01761 451323		0773 4590757	pgcomps@avonhgpg.co.uk



Club Meetings

Club meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at the Compass Inn at Tormarton (just off the A46 about ¼ mile north of junction 18 on the M4). Arrive at 8pm for an 8.30pm start. For further details please contact Tim Pentreath. Dates of the next meetings are as follows:

April 3rd – Judy Leden & Chris Dawes (note this is the 1st Thursday)

May 8th – XC Talk by Alex Coltman and Martin Stanton

June 8th – Club Sites Evening

NOVA is the newsletter of the Avon Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, or Committee of the Club.

NOVA can also be found online at www.avonhgpg.co.uk

*Send your articles to the Editor, Cathy Lawrence, at
112 Prestbury Drive, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9LE Tel: 01985 214 579
Email: editor@avonhgpg.co.uk or nova@avonhgpg.co.uk*

Cover shot – Alex and passenger at Westbury, January 2003 by Tim Pentreath

Editorial



If it seems a long time since the last issue of Nova that's because it is, but hopefully nobody is counting the months. Until last month the pages were bare, except for "Charlie's Bonus Day Off" promptly written the day of the flight last December – Charlie, sorry it's taken so long to reach the press.

Now people are getting airborne again, the days are getting longer, and Spring is in the air literally the contributions are starting to flow in again. Thank you to all those who have already written in to share their stories with the rest of the club. Some folks, blessed with more time and spare cash than many of us have already had up to three weeks holiday, flying in other parts of the World such as South Africa, Florida, and Spain - we look forward to hearing all about those adventures and experiences.

I believe that communication via newsletters or email groups in hang-gliding and paragliding clubs like ours, where we don't have a fixed base or headquarters, is very important. Whilst our sport is very much an individual activity, club membership means that we are never alone. There is always someone you can turn to share your epic flight stories, to buddy up with or ask for advice. This is particularly important for new members and low air-timers – which is what I was a couple of years ago. I am proud to be part of such a friendly, sociable, supportive group of people.

Cathy Lawrence

Chairman's Waffle

Well it's been a surprisingly good start to the year really, with some lovely days in January and February and now a beautiful settled spell in mid-March, and we've now had our first few entries in the XC leagues – I hope you're all getting some good airtime. However it is at this time of the year that those so-called "punchy" spring thermals start doing their punchy thing, so if like me, you haven't done much flying over winter, remember to take care during those first few flights in the more lively spring air...

Still on a safety note, Robin's second annual reserve throwing session at Cattle Country has now happened – I haven't heard how it went, but let's hope there were no nasty surprises when people tried to throw their reserves. If you were unable to attend and haven't had your reserve repacked for a while, then now's a good time to think about getting it done!



We've got world class speakers at our next club meeting on Thursday 3rd April – husband and wife team, Chris Dawes and Judy Leden, will be talking about breaking world records, Leonardo's flying machines and UK XC flying amongst other things... make sure you don't miss it!

In an initiative to help some of our newer pilots do their first XC flights, Martin Stanton is organising the first of six planned XC weekends – to kick off, a friendly XC comp against the SE Wales club over the Easter w/e over in SE Wales – contact Martin for more details. If we have good weather it's sure to be a great weekend!

Finally a piece of news that I'm adding as I proof read this issue – the Wessex Club are holding a summer bash on 20th-22nd June at Lyscombe Farm (8 miles NNE of Dorchester) to celebrate the purchase of Bell Hill (which they think will go through in the next few weeks). Pilots from neighbouring clubs are invited – visit their website (www.mighty-wessex.co.uk) for more information...

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Nova, and of course to Cathy, who I know spends hours putting it all together.

Well, I can't think of anything else particularly noteworthy to say so I'll sign off now without boring you any more – get out there and aviate!

Tim Pentreath

News

Membership Renewals

It's renewal time again. If, by the time you read this, you have not received your renewal (electronic version for those with email) for 2003 then most likely you've changed your email address or moved. Please let the membership secretary know if you do move or change email address.

Mountain Flying/XC Courses

In April and May of this year, Chris Scammell of Hidden Valley is running 4 mountain flying/xc courses in the Lake District. Each course is 4 days long and covers all aspects of mountain and cross-country flying. Two of the courses are for women only and are being co-hosted by ex World Air Games champion Kaz Harland. The other two courses are open to both sexes. The courses have been timed to catch the most reliable weather in the northern UK. Dates are April 18th-21st and April 24 - 27th for open courses, May 10th - 13th and May 24th - 27th for women only courses. The courses cost £190 which includes alternative activities but not accommodation. Further details available at www.hiddenvalley-paragliding.co.uk, or tel: 0870 7441677

Caribbean Free Flying

For those of you in need of some pre season adventure, there are still places available on an adventure trip to the Dominican Republic in March. If you've never heard of it as a paragliding destination then check out the website www.caribbeanfreeflying.com to see some fantastic pictures. It's like a huge version of the lake district but with 3,000m mountains and a climate that's a lot more appropriate for our sport. Get in contact if you want more info.

Also coming up is the first XC training courses of the season in Central Italy. They are the weeks either side of Easter (12/4 - 19/4 & 19/4 - 26/4) and flights from the UK are cheap as Go flies to Roma from Stansted.

Bob
bob@bobdruery.com
www.bobdruery.com

Bell Hill site purchase

A message from David Daniels re Avon's contribution to the Bell Hill fund...

From: David R Daniels [mailto:para_glider@btinternet.com]
Sent: 08 March 2003 12:02
To: Tim Pentreath
Subject: Many Thanks from Wessex

Tim ... and all the members of the Avon Hang Gliding & Paragliding Club

Your club's cheque for £500 toward our purchase of Bell Hill reached me today. May I express, on behalf of our committee and all Wessex members, our sincere appreciation for your generosity. Everything is gradually slotting into place, and the necessary funds are gradually coming together, so that we should be in a position to complete the purchase by June/July time. - and every act of generosity such as yours makes the path that much more certain.

You, and your members, will have been aware that we ran a raffle with paraglider wings being donated by both Ozone and Sky as the main prizes. I know that several of your members bought tickets. This exercise raised a massive £9,000 toward our £60k goal - and I would like our thanks passed on to all those in your club that participated in helping us reach this figure.

Regards
David Daniels
Secretary and Website Administrator
Wessex Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

HG XC League Rules

1. Flights may be made from anywhere in the UK (used to be Avon sites only);
2. Any Full Avon member may enter flights made on a class 1 or 5 HG;
3. To qualify for Trophies pilot must name Avon as their club for all entries made in the National XC League;
4. Flight rules etc as per National HG XC League;
5. Except any number of flights may be entered and used in the cumulative total for the year;
5. Trophies will be awarded to top three pilots on Class 1 gliders and top pilot on class 5.

Avon XC league: hgcomps@avonhggp.co.uk
National league: <http://www.uknxcl.org.uk/>

HG Easter Comp Rules

1. Longest individual HG flight by a full Avon member in UK over Bank holiday weekend wins the trophy.
2. If not claimed on Easter weekend competition roles over to each subsequent Bank holiday of the same year until claimed.
3. All flights score according to National HG XC League rules e.g.(x3, x2 and 1.5) for triangle, out and return and Goal flights.

Club Annual Awards 2002

The club annual awards were presented at the Christmas dinner on December 13th last year at the Rockery in Bath. It was a great night, and for those who missed it, or were there but may not remember, here's a few photos taken by Tony.

PG Trophies

XC 1st - *Jim Mallinson*

XC 2nd - *Rich Harding*

XC 3rd - *Alex Coltman*

Longest flight - *Rich Harding*

Longest DHV 1/2 flight - *Tom Mayne*

Best newcomer to XC - *Martin Stanton*

Most Improved Pilot- *Jo Eades*

Dave Yeandle Shield (Easter comp) - *Dave Yeandle*

Macaskill (tree landing) Cup - *Chris Jones*



HG Trophies

Easter Shield: Kevin Winter 15.69 Km

XC Class 1: 1st Tony Moore 85.44

2nd John Jones 73.78

3rd Neil Atkinson 32.95

HG XC Class 5: 1st Neville Almond 356.07

2nd John Jones 184.76

Most improved pilot – no nominations – prize not awarded.

General Club Trophies

Nova – Best Article – *Garry Mitchell for Westbury XC*

Nova – Photographic Competition – *Cathy Lawrence – St.Hilare pictured left*

Fancy Hat Competition – *Cathy Lawrence*



Safety Report: Body Position before landing and immediately after take off

There have been a few recent incidents and many more near misses where PG pilots are attempting to land in a supine or laid-back position. May I just draw to everyone's attention the fact that it's this part of flying that's the most dangerous! It may look super cool to swoop in low then use the brakes to both convert for some height and haul yourself out of the harness, but it's also asking for trouble.

Even on the smoothest of days there will be turbulence associated with ground features and it's this air that you are flying in. If it becomes a habit then when flying on a site in thermic conditions you are very vulnerable. Your legs are your landing gear so it's wise to leave them down for a while after take off and get them down early before landing. Modern harnesses have shock absorbing back protection and many people seem to think this will save them from any injury - below are some comments from a pilot who can tell you otherwise.

"In mid January I made a poor decision to top land in sinking air. Then to compound my mistake I stayed sat in my harness, well I didn't want to break an ankle again did I? Luckily Tom Mayne had warned me of this dangerous habit of staying in the harness until the last moment. I just managed to stick my legs half out before the impact and they took maybe 20% of the shock. The pain in my back was so severe I could not move. I thought about trying to wiggle my toes but was so frightened they may not work I just could not even try. But once again I have got away with it, The hospital says I'm OK and one month later I am glad to report my back pain has reduced and I can sleep almost an hour each night now. I urge everyone to practice flying with legs down, ready to PLF.

This habit of using the flare to hoist oneself out of the harness is, in my opinion, a habit that nearly put me in a wheelchair."

And it's not just our local pilots, Will Gadd in his article about flying XC says he comes into land with big ears pulled in because he has seen so many accidents at low levels with pilots coming in to land in thermic fields. And I bet he is dangling in his harness from a good way up! So let's all fly safe and enjoy the coming season.

Cheers
Alex

"A good scare is worth more to a man than good advice" Ed Howe (1853-1937)

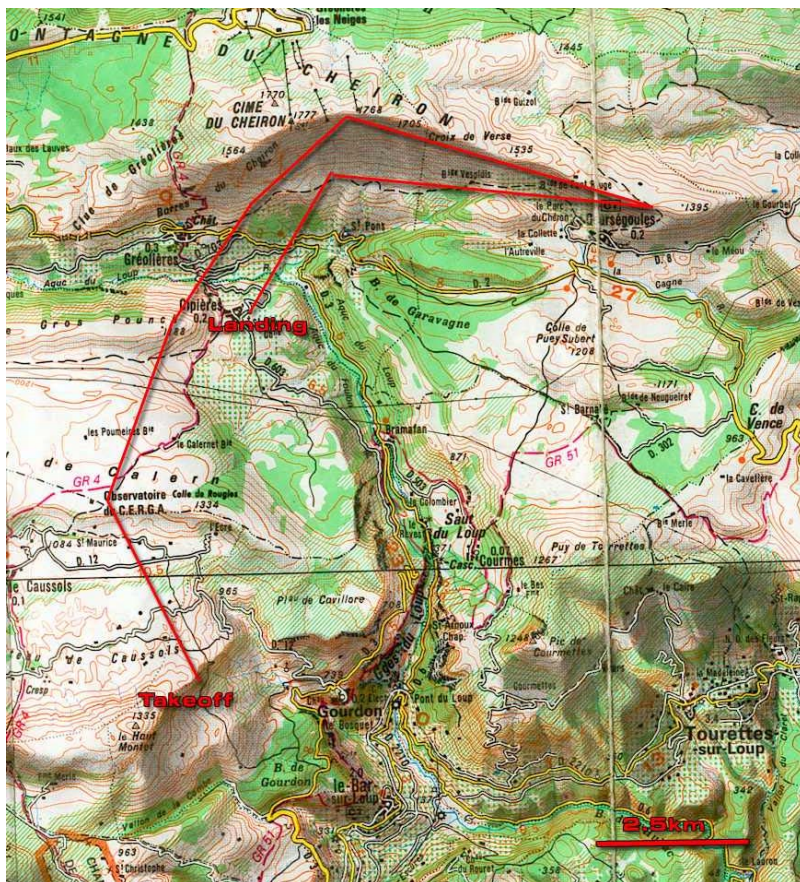
Charlie's Bonus Day Off

Sunday Dec 1st, 2002
Gourdon, France

Today has been a party bonus day! To begin with, it was a gorgeous, cold, clear, sunny, blue-sky day; second up, I had left the house expecting to do three hours' cleaning and then get a late flight in if conditions allowed it. When I arrived at the villa that I clean I was offered a coffee and a chat for an hour, but no cleaning required to day!

I blessed my "Get out of Jail Free" card and was on my way home at 11am, trying to decide whether to stop off at Gourdon (drive up), or to continue to Gréolières, which I really like flying, plus the exercise of the walk up would be welcome after a rather sedentary week! As I approached Gourdon I could see gliders up and doing OK, so the decision was made; no point moving on to a site which may not work, when this one clearly is!

There were cars, paragliders and hang gliders everywhere when I got to the top of the hill, and loads of paragliders in the air easily staying up. It's been a bit rainy in France of late (although I was in Morocco at the time, I sympathise with the locals of course), and everyone was out for the first time in a while, excitedly unpacking and getting airborne. There was a really good but frenzied atmosphere as pilots "bonjour"ed and unpacked rapidly at the sides, leaving the launch area free and unclogged for rapid take-offs as soon as people were ready. I think there may have been a comp on too, as there were a lot of aspecty, logo-ed and numbered wings around. In my haste I feverishly had an impromptu game of Nova April 2003



Thermalling away from the seething masses at Gourdon

Cat's Cradle with my harness before finally being able to climb in and join the party in the sky.

It's been a few weeks since I've flown Gourdon, and I've always liked the place, but today was really special. The mountains in Italy are well snow-capped (Ski resorts are open and everything), yet the low-angled winter sun was reflecting an orange splash off the stripy blue Med. I've never seen so many gliders in the air at Gourdon, but it wasn't crowded. A gaggle was high above the upper take-off, and another was climbing from left of the lower launch, with several of us just-launched pilots milling about at ridge height – but not for long! Lovely climbs took us up and back behind launch to about 2500ft above where I remembered to zero my Alti 2 (300' ish ATO maybe - technical flyer I'm not!).

I looked down on a sea of gliders below me, and struggled with gloves and camera for a few moments to record the sight! What was unique about today in this situation was a lack of a strong wind – you could pop back to launch if you liked, or wobble about waiting for the next thermal just where you were. There were markers showing the lift everywhere, so I joined a small gaggle behind me and we climbed, drifted and hopped back onto the Observatory ridge, where there was already a gaggle climbing and others who had presumably missed that one, trawling up and down the ridge. I arrived high enough to join the gaggle, and found my circles were taking me back faster than the others were moving that way, but I was having such a nice time I decided to stick with my guns and do it my way. Then I

noticed a logo-ed UP above me, which was good. I looked at Cipières, an easy glide away, and decided to head for the hill behind it and try to top up there. The logo-ed UP was higher than me but had decided to leave before I did. He glided straight over Cipières and headed for the Cheiron. Having hung around in 0s / 1s for a few minutes and not really gained much in the way of height, I decided to go for the Cheiron too (the sort of decision that usually sees me on the deck, but today I was confident I'd make it).

I arrived above the Gréolières take-off an hour after I'd launched at Gourdon, and enjoyed a childish moment of glee that I was getting to fly both Gourdon and Gréolières today! I headed straight for the gully right of launch, and had the quickest ride up to the top

mast and ski stations that I've ever managed, spurred on by the four or five gliders thermalling up above it. The mountains to the North were snow-clad and gorgeous, but the sky over there was filling up with high cloud, probably heralding yet another front approaching. The gaggle had headed back South again, presumably to complete a triangle back to Gourdon, which seemed like a great idea, only I wasn't sure about the landing options on their route. I decided to fly down to Coursegoules and get high, and try to watch where they went. One yellow glider headed out with me, but although it was easy enough to stay up above the ridge, it was a little lacking in thermals. I got to Coursegoules and saw a red glider landing below, so decided to head back to the masts to try and get high enough to make an attempt to return back to Gourdon. Three trail bikers waved as I climbed back up the cliffs towards them, so I waved back and continued to climb out above them.



The high cloud had got between the sun and us by this point, and the sky to the North looked mares-taily and a bit windy. This is where my paranoia got the better of me, and I thought it felt rougher at the top than it had done before. I decided to head to Cipières, rather than heading out to where I thought I'd seen the earlier gaggle go, as it seemed the safer bet. I didn't meet any thermals on the glide over, and there didn't seem to be many gliders around any more, except for a few landing in the Gréolières landing field. I picked out a large field by the road in Cipières, and flew over Bob and Claire's house to see if Claire was in; visions of a cuppa and bike to borrow to retrieve the car seeming to make my life easier. The van wasn't there, but I was too low to make the hill behind

the village anyway, so I was committed to landing. I flew low over Cipières, and could see people in the bar looking up between the red Provencal rooftops at me. I took a couple of piccies of our flat, and headed for the field.

As I packed up the glider, obviously beaming from the great fun I'd just had, the owner of the field and his mates popped their head over the wall. I got ready to be apologetic and polite (as best I could in French), but the guy didn't mind me landing there at all (when there's no *herbe* in the field), and he seemed really interested to know where I'd come from. The way he was absent-mindedly twiddling his shotgun as he spoke to me was a bit unnerving, but it's hunting season and the road out of Cipières is lined with

hunters at the moment, so guns aren't a surprise! I told him I lived in Cipières, but that my car was at Gourdon and I was going to borrow a bike to retrieve it. He popped back with another chap a few minutes later, who said he was going to Gourdon in 3 hours and could take me if I liked. I thanked him, but as I'd cleverly left my flat keys in the car, and Claire was out (Bob and Marcus were in Telford) I decided to go for the bike option instead, which as it turned out was a

very enjoyable hour's exercise, and which meant that all 3 of my objectives for the day had been met in one flight!

Man, it's great here! If anyone needs a floor to stay on for a winter visit to the Alpes-Maritimes, the offer's always open.

Charlotte Hedges

THE MAGNIFICENT SIX (AND SOMETIMES EIGHT)

Many have searched, many have failed...the search for that mythical site where the winds were always light and the thermals always strong plagued my mind....only drink seemed to dull the pain. There could only be one course of action. To put together a team that could cross the ocean, head south and find this place...if it existed at all....We were to become the magnificent six...and to be fair, most of the time eight!



*Robinnot in the flush of youth, but an experienced cowboy, been around, seen stuff.
Nigey...fast and handy with his weapon.
Simone...his Woman, hard drinking, card sharp.
Gareth...did he hold some dark secret in those leather gaiters? We would find out.
Mike...an old cow poke, or was that just a viscous rumour.
Mark...The new kid, wild and brash...if there was trouble, he would find it.*

For such a trip we would need a support wagon, it would be impossible to carry all our equipment on our trusty steeds.

*Marcus....an experienced drover, been in trouble, had to keep moving.
Caf....his woman, nobody messed with her without getting a stiletto in the buttocks.*

We rode off into the night, traveling fast to avoid bandits. After two hours we arrived at the ferry port. A young woman sat in the ferry mans porch. 'Tickets please' she said. 'We're desperado's, we don't need no tickets, I drawled.

'I think, Mr Desperado, that you will find that you do' she said with a glint in her eye. 'Don't you go givin' me no lip girl, or I'll have you over my knee and spank ye' (I thought privately as I handed her my ticket). Once aboard this huge new ferry machine we marveled at its size and pretty lights....After a hearty meal of stew and beans we bedded down...it was a windy night.

Early next morning we arrived in a foreign land, the riding was hard, fierce winds and driving rain lashed our faces; determined we pressed on. Nigey and Gareth played pony swapping to relieve the weariness. The weather gods smiled on us late morning, the sky cleared and the sun warmed our tired bodies. Eventually, saddle sore we arrived at a small village at the foot of some large mountains. Riding in, mothers gathered their children and rushed indoors, shutters were closed and suspicion stared out on us from every face. What could these strangers want in these parts? This was Roquefort, about half a days ride from the Pyranneean Pecos.

I dismounted and strolled into the bar....'Babycham please barman' the locals sniggered, this was not going well...'Eeerrr I mean whisky' (I needed back up and fast). The gang walked in, fanning out to cover any exits. 'Where can a girl get a game of dominoes around here?' snarled Simone. The locals made a place not knowing what they had let themselves in for. Caf pushed towards the bar...'Get back in the wagon woman' demanded Marcus. She spat playfully onto his

boots...'you gonna make me'? Marcus knowing when he was licked, moved aside, 'the whisky's on me tonight she said... Hungry we demanded food...it seemed that in this land they eat anything that moved, the vegetarians searched the menu for something that did not have too many legs or gills or both...How the waiters laughed at their strange dietary habits...vegetables could be heard screaming from the kitchen and duly arrived well massacred.

There was no trouble that night, too much beer and food kept the girls from gambling too late and Mark did not pick a fight. After we had checked our mounts were settled down for the night we slept easily. After all, we had a mountain range to cross the next day.

The day dawned clear and bright, the pace quickened as the joy of carving around mountain bends got to us all. Reaching the highest point, we stopped for lunch. Our beasts of burden, hot and steaming from the effort of the climb, needed rest and time to cool. Looking south we could see the beginnings of a fast dusty plain....so this was Spain. Sweeping down the foothills of this mighty range, I suddenly spotted two local militia; their boots and buttons glinting in the sun. Should I out run them? After all, they had not saddled up....well they might catch the others, but I am on my way. The gang passed successfully except for our rear guard Gareth. 'Eh Gringo, were you go?' Luckily Gareth gave a brilliant impression of being 'none too bright' and they let him go. Whether they stopped him to admire his fetching green and purple leathers or try and discover our true purpose we shall never know. The rest of us waited in a hidden canyon until we could be sure of getting clean away.

This country seemed perfect for our purpose...large open plains, long ridges and blue sky with perfect fluffy cumulus...had we found the answer to our dreams? It would take another day of hard riding to find out. Next morning the trail looked good...as we travelled south the locals waved and threw their hats in the air as we passed. Sometimes we were held back by long teams of drovers, Mike Riley received several international signals of goodwill from the same

drover... As we dodged the tumble weeds we saw the camp fires of Alicante in the distance.

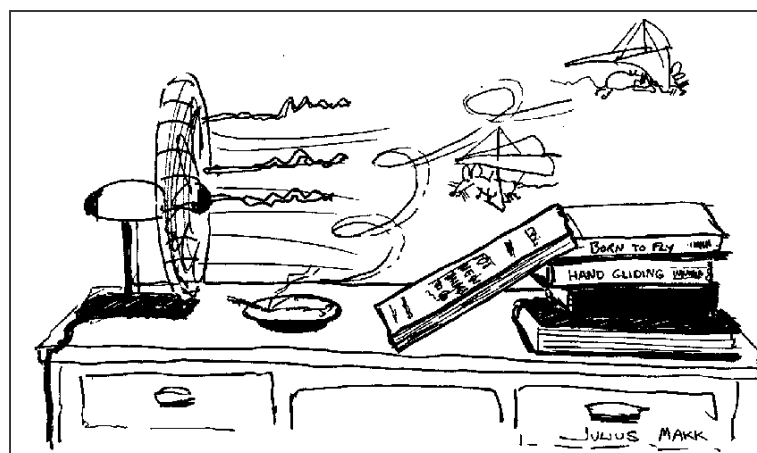
Eventually we arrived at El Altet (translated from Spanish it means 'little whore house by the sea'). Here we received terrible news.... Another gang had already arrived and claimed the sites for themselves. The Avon B gang had got there by using a new form of travel...called big bird in the sky! We could still see them landing as the sun set, obviously no longer able to stay up as the last thermals of the day finally died. Nick the local marshal was trying hard to keep the factions apart...coffee and beans seemed to do the trick.

We had traveled so long, so many hardships, only to be beaten...we joined forces with the Avon B team and became the largest and most feared gang in the area....even marshal Nick looked worried. We regularly sent out scouting parties to different parts of the range....the country was fantastic. The gang mounted their air broncos for some nice flying, Mike Riley got lost and landed about 8km away from the rest of us...fearing he had been taken hostage we sent out search parties....only to find that he had heard the whisky was cheaper in those parts. Whilst packing our kit away, Robin found a rattler amongst the almond trees, only just quicker on the draw we once again won the day.

As the weather broke we decided to head north again...back to our farmsteads...back to bad coffee and bad food. Using a different trail through the mountains we marveled at the vultures just waiting for someone to fall into a gorge.

May be we didn't find the fabled flying site that you here in stories...may be it doesn't exist except in cow pokes minds...we will keep searching...may be form a new gang next year... Any new gang members would be welcome as long as they can spit more than five yards.

Robin Brown



Video & Book Reviews

The club has a collection of flying related videos and books that are available to borrow free of charge. They can be signed out at the monthly club meetings. Garry Mitchell, the Club Librarian gives a taste of some of the material on offer:

Fly Harder

The latest offering from Rob Whittall & Co. A full on video with the boys talking the talk and doing the do. Full of don't try this at home flying with some of the world's best Acro pilots, all set to a good soundtrack. Rob and the boys talk openly of the joy and fulfillment that they get from flying. This video leaves you feeling good about yourself and your experiences, as well as wishing you could have their skills if just for five minutes!

Colonel Basir's Flying Circus

This video is a treat. It is the story of one mans' dream to hold a paramotoring tour along the coast of Indonesia. The filming is good. The story is interesting with some great in-flight footage. These guys really give their all to this project and it comes across as a fun and exciting adventure. Made all the better by a handful of barking mad Russians on a huge learning curve and an in-front-of-the-camera crash into the sea. A must see for all para-motorheads and a good laugh for the rest of us.

Riding the Wind

This is a must see for all who dream.

The story of a dream to fly across The Alps by paraglider - ending in Italy. This is probably one of the greatest free-flying videos around at the moment. The in-air footage is great, much of it shot from a tandem that flew some of the route, but mainly shot from cameras mounted on Tony's own wing or harness. The entire flight took 3 days. He was in the air for as much as 9 hours at a time with incredible height gains. You see him suffering from extreme cold and hypoxia, but you also get the real feel of a big flight. This video gives you an opportunity to see what is really doable with a paraglider as well as inspiring you to greater things. A real insight into the possibilities and privileges of this thing we do on sunny weekends. Let down by possibly the lamest narration ever.

The Best of Paragliding

If you don't like country and western music played on a banjo then don't watch this film. But if you do then you're in for a real treat with this one. This film is full of very excited Americans with really pulled up socks. Some hang-gliding, as well as paragliding; a group of low air timers travel through the US in search of some flying. Lots of really good-looking sites with some flying, but it's all a bit sad except the really pulled up socks. If you are a low air-timer then you will find this film interesting. If you are traveling to the US then you may find it useful. But unless the only other thing you had planned this week was a spot of knitting then its probable not worth getting excited about. That is of course except the socks.

Major Sky Jump

101 things that your mother told you not to do with a paraglider. Mad Mike Kung at his best, balloon jumping, Acro-flying and just having fun in his own special way. Mike Kung or Jacky Chan? Who can tell from the way he flies. If you want to spend time sitting on the edge of the sofa thinking 'Oh shit! This is possibly not a good plan', then this is the film for you. All action. All full on flying with good camera work and sound track. Well worthy of a fondle!

Adventures of Another POO

This is a book all about caving. CAVING? I here you cry! Yes caving, some members of the club will already have guessed why this book belongs in our library; for the rest of you this book will have little meaning unless you are interested in caving. But for those of us who were lucky enough to know the author, it gives a very interesting insight into the man we all thought we knew. It offers an explanation for caving in your underpants and answers many other unasked questions. A must for everyone who has ever come in contact with the insuppressible Dave Yeandle. If you have never heard of Dave but like a good yarn then read on.

Snowdonia Highs

22nd & 23rd March 2003, Tim Pentreath, 23km around Snowdonia

It's Friday morning and a plan is starting to form - could Snowdonia be the place to fly this weekend? The UK is still dominated by the high pressure that's brought the fine and settled conditions for much of March, and light southerly winds are forecast for Snowdonia. After a few emails to the Avon SmartGroup I establish that Stephen Chiles and Lisa Dodds are heading up there on Saturday morning, all I need is someone to share the petrol money to convince me that I should go. I eventually get hold of Simon Kerr at about 9pm on Friday evening and persuade him that he really does want to get up at 5am the following morning to drive to Bath - good man!

Saturday dawns and by 6.10am we're on the road, heading north. A full English breakfast at Frankley Services sets us back £6 each, but also sets us up for the day, and by 10am we've arrived at Pen-y-Gyrwd which is the main landing area for the Glyders site, and the best place to assess the conditions. It's also where Harvey's house is (the house that the Avon Club rent each year) so we go and have a coffee with Harvey and Frances who very kindly offer the four of us beds for the night. This is a result, as although I was geared up for a night in the car, I didn't really fancy it that much!

By 11am we're walking up to the Glyders take off (click [here](#) to see a map), which is about a 20min walk up the hill. It's apparent there isn't much wind here so we carry on a bit further, and a few thermic puffs convince us to stop and lay out. I hold back after Simon, and Stephen & Lisa (on the tandem) go down, and decide to pack up and walk up to the top takeoff, a further 20mins up the hill. This is at about 2300' compared to the lower takeoff which is at 1300', and there was a nice breeze up here. It's still about 1000' below the very top, but I'd walked enough for today!

To cut a long story short, I took off at about 1.30pm and landed some three hours later after some great flying generally exploring the area around the Glyders.
Nova April 2003

It was nice and thermic with steady climbs of 400-600fpm taking one up to a max height of 4300', about 1000' above the summit. The view over the back here is awesome with a virtually sheer drop down to the lakes in the Ogwen valley 2300' feet below! The inversion was very obvious in the distance - a 360 degree dirty brown smudge above the horizon.

After packing up we got ourselves sorted out at Harvey's and then headed down to Pete's Eats in Llanberis for the best café food you've ever tasted - my "Monster Omlette" was superb! Suitably full now, all we needed was some liquid refueling so we headed to the pub in Capel Curig for all those "there I was" stories. Unfortunately as I was the only one out of the four of us who got up high it was a bit one-sided :-)

So with bellyfulls of food and beer it was back to the house to crash out...

We awoke to another glorious day on Sunday, and with the prospect of lighter winds we decided a hike up Snowdon was in order. But before that, there was the small matter

of cooking a monster breakfast to contend with, after all, we needed sustenance for the two hour climb ahead of us!

With that behind us, or should I say inside us, we set off up the Pyg track at 10am, and made steady progress arriving at the col above Glaslyn at midday. Unfortunately there was a strong wind blowing up the cwm - there was no way we'd be taking off from there... So we walked back down the path until we found a small grassy patch just off the track 200' below the col. Here the wind was much lighter, with thermic gusts coming through regularly (map).

Simon was a man on a mission after not getting much flying yesterday, and took off first gaining a good deal of height immediately. He looked like he was having fun, but after maybe ten minutes I commented to Lisa that he was getting bumped around a bit whilst trying to make the transition over to Y Lliwedd in front.



Midday on Sunday with Snowdon in the background

Literally a moment later, whilst we were looking at him, Simon's glider decided to pack itself up and go home! Five seconds later it was over and Simon decided to fly down to change his trousers...! Actually he was suffering from acute cramp in both legs and came in to land above the Miners track howling in agony - what a bugger. Forever looking on the bright side though, he did say that he had his legs massaged back to life by a rather attractive lady...

Next off was Lisa who managed extremely well given her relative inexperience and the nature of the take-off and surrounding terrain. It's certainly not a place for the faint hearted! She headed out and was content with a short flight down to land by the lakeside.

Now it was my turn! I did the worst takeoff of us all, bouncing the back of my harness off the track on my way through, losing my sun-glasses in the process, and then to cap it all I had to pump out a small knot in the lines up by my right wingtip... hmmm, fun and games, not!

However once in the air I soon gained some height and was content cruising around avoiding the area where Simon performed his SIV course, waiting until Stephen got off. After a couple of attempts from a spot a little bit lower and more into wind he was away and I watched him gain a bit of height before soaring the lower slopes above the Miners track before landing near to the causeway across the lower lake.

Ok, so I was still in the air, and fairly high above Crib Goch so I decided to head out the immediate vicinity of Snowdon across to the Glyders, just 4km away to the NE. I immediately relaxed in the gentle lift when I approached the ridge, and was able to let go of the brakes and re-tie the right hand line to my speedbar which had slipped undone a few minutes earlier!

There were a couple of red Gradient's high above Glyder Fach when I arrived and I spent the next half an hour or so trying in vain to get as high as them. It was actually breezier than yesterday and every time

you got into a thermal it would take you up and over the back before you really had enough height to be comfortable. There were quite a few pilots fairly high over the valley in front, so following Simon's briefing earlier about how to best get onto Snowdon from the Glyders, I attempted to push out to the high ground the other side of the valley. Two or three times I tried this, but got drilled each time, having to turn back to get high again. Bear in mind it's a 3km transition to get across, so it's not that easy, but some people were managing it.



Looking down over Crib Goch

In the end I opted for the direct 3.5km route to the "pump" flying over Berfedd and arriving with sufficient height to scrape around the corner and onto a sunny slope at Gallt y Wenallt. I shared this bit of the hill with a large bird of prey (wasn't sure if it was a buzzard - for the birders amongst you it had fairly prominent white flashes on the lower surface of its wings - maybe you can tell me what it was) for a few moments before I carried on traversing the fairly shallow slope underneath Y Lliwedd. I was losing height all this time so I gambled on getting something off the crags at Craig-ddu (above Watkins track), otherwise I'd be turning back to land by the lake at Llyn Gwynant. Fortunately it paid off and a few

minutes later I was shouting across to the walkers on Y Lliwedd as I carried on up past them!



Snowdon summit

From here it's only a mile across to Snowdon itself so I flew along the ridge slightly wary of the SAR helicopter buzzing around in the area where we had taken off from two hours earlier. I was still a few hundred feet beneath the summit, but the SE facing slope was still working well and after a minute or so I was yelling "Yee-Hah" as I reached the summit. It

must have been a great sight for all the walkers at the top as I came from below and then carried on circling until I was 1000' above the top (4500' asl).

I've only flown up in Snowdonia on two earlier occasions over the years and nothing came close to this experience - even some of my decent UK XC's pale into insignificance alongside scenery and views like this, it really is truly spectacular. I was content

enjoying the views over Snowdon for fifteen minutes or so, but it was now 3.30pm and I thought it was probably about time I started heading back down to earth, so I headed back along the ridge high over Crib Goch for the second time, and then over Pen-y-Pass where I lazily lost enough height to see that the car wasn't there. Excellent I thought, Simon must have driven it down to Pen-y-Gyrwd, and so after another three hour flight over some of the UK's most stunning

scenery I touched down with another huge grin over my face thinking can this really be March?

Tim Pentreath

More spectacular photos and a route of Tim's flight can be found on the Avon Paragliding XC website www.avonpgxc.co.uk

16/03/03 – Mike Andrews, 6.7km and 14.3km from Pandy

Pandy - Gently thermic proved tricky for the low airtimers who were dropping down all over the place. At noon I got as far as the Black Darren cliffs before totally losing lift and having to leave the ridge because of the horrific rocks and chasm below (and a pair of peregrines nesting). I tried for a low save over the trees in the Red Darren bowl, but as it was my first flight for 5 months I erred on the side of caution and went for the car park, landing on the road to the puzzlement of picnickers. I immediately got a lift back to TO by Alex a city broker who 'liked taking risks' and therefore wanted to learn to paraglide!

Second go at 14.05 I made it again (using thermals) to Black Darren SO 298 295 and then back to Hatteral Hill fort tree clump 324 229 before returning to TO at 318 234. If I am allowed the whole ridge run that is about 14k. Coming back from the second run I saw Alex and we shared a couple of thermals. The old Astral still seems to climb well - but I have lost weight!

02/03/03 – Garry Sandell: 24km from Selsley, Alex Coltman: 9km from Westbury

A beautiful day by all accounts with a couple of flights entered - Garry Sandell's 24km from Selsley was the best. Alex was at Westbury and had an extended 9km glide which started with an 8 up climb out - not bad for 2nd March!

05/02/03 – Alex Coltman, 24km from Hay Bluff

Alex gets the first one of the year with his 24km milk run from Hay Bluff to Crickhowell.

2003 PG XC League (most recent flight entered on 16/3/03)

Rank	Name	Glider	1	2	Flights	Top 6	Av Top 6	All	Av All
1	Alex Coltman	Flying Planet Whisper	24.7	9.2	2	33.9	16.9	33.9	16.9
2	Garry Sandell	Gradient Topaz	24.0		1	24.0	24.0	24.0	24.0
3	Mike Andrews	Swing Astral	14.3	6.7	2	21.0	10.5	21.0	10.5
4	Jo Eades	Windtech Serak	14.2		1	14.2	14.2	14.2	14.2
Grand Total			77.1	16.0	6	93.1	15.5	93.1	15.5

**Do you want to be more in touch with what's happening in the club?
Are you on the internet?
If so, then join the avonhgpg smartgroup**

Members that are connected to the internet are reminded that the club has its own smartgroup which enables members to communicate with each other.

To register at www.smartgroups.com/groups/avonhgpg

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Paragliding Videos- Great Xmas presents for yourself!
"Flamenco Dune" - weird Andre Bucher film, synchronised flying in/on/into and over the back of enormous Sahara dunes. £5
"Thermik" - semi instructional video. Features para and hanggliders flying in and around Lanzarote, the Schleswig Holstein "fairy castle" and the German mountains. Features good 'ole Robby Whittall and Toni Bender.
Tel: Mike Richards 01308 428219 or 07779 299805 £10

WANTED

Garmin 12 (or similar) GPS.
Tel: 00 33 493 599 381 Email: charlie@skytribe.co.uk

If you are looking to buy or sell a used glider or equipment then check out the SkyAds link on the club website www.avonhgpg.co.uk. To advertise in Nova club members should phone Cathy on 01985 214 579 or email nova@avonhgpg.co.uk

Dear Nova,

Floppies Beware – the Stiffies strike back!

I enjoyed Tony's piece in last month's Nova – and he is right – just like Skywings, it is in danger of becoming a PG mag, and it is us HG pilots' fault! We are mostly a low profile bunch, not inclined to write rave accounts of our flying for the perusal of the rest of the Free Flying Community.

In fact there was quite a bit of HG XC flying last year – it just went unreported in Nova, and you'd have to look at the national XC league, or pick up the odd reference in the flying diary to get any idea of what's been going on.

Last year some of us got together to plan trips, and sort out retrieves, and we had a lot of fun, as well as putting in some distance too. Nev Almond got the national class 5 distance record, with 234k, and I got my personal UK best with 98k on the same day, but from a different hill. Tony Moore did his first HGXC, and then went on to win the club class 1 league. We also competed in the Airwave Challenge, and got to the finals.

Here's how Avon HG Pilots did in the National League.

Pilot	Best	2nd	3rd	4th	Total	Glider	
Nev Almond	234.29		121.78	120.78		476.85	Eclipse
John Jones	98.63		46.98	38.44	26.82	210.87	Atos
Tony Moore	30.18		29.86	25.9		85.43	Klassic
J Martin	68.80					68.80	Laminar
Colin Hale	34.31	26.92				61.23	Concept
Neil Atkinson	32.95					32.95	CSX

Overall the club came fifth.

I know that several other pilots for example, Kev Winter and also Nick Romanko did XC's, but didn't enter them in the National League, and also the National League main table only shows the four or five best flights for each pilot.

Many of us go abroad to fly, and there is a wealth of HG experience in the club of sites both in Europe and the Americas.

Following Tony's article, three of us, Tony, Neil Atkinson, and myself met up to think through some ways of raising the profile of hang gliding within the club.

We discussed XC flying on hang gliders – particularly what might be stopping pilots from making their first XC flight, and we have come up with some ideas to support them, and to encourage HGXC flying in general. These ideas include having regular XC weekends, out of the Avon area if need be, with travel organised, retrieves sorted out, and briefings on the hill, an HGXC Smartgroup to aid communication, and more coverage of HG flying in Nova.

Tony is writing to Avon HG pilots about all this.

I know that many pilots enjoy flying locally, and that is enough for them; but I also know that there are many pilots who would like to try XC flying, or do more of it. We believe that with a little bit of planning, and mutual support we can make that possible.

XC flying is great – all of it – the planning, the anticipation, and the flight – long or short. Even the retrieves can be epic!

John Jones



Club Coaches

In an attempt to help new club pilots find their feet in the club, particularly when they're on the hill, we've come up with some initiatives to help identify club coaches on the hill. The club has some 30+ club coaches but unless they've taken the trouble to sew their BHPA Club Coach badge onto their flying suit there's not much chance of identifying them! So all club coaches will be sent a white ribbon with their membership renewal packs, similar to the red ribbon that new CPs use, to attach to their harness. The idea behind this is that at least you'll be able to spot them in the air more easily and then be able to identify them on the ground. Obviously it will also help if club coaches do actually sew their badge onto their flying suit!

In addition, Tony Moore is also compiling a list of club coaches (and collecting photos of them), for inclusion on the club website and in Nova.

It is hoped that these two initiatives will allow the club to get the most benefit from the wealth of experience that remains largely hidden from view most of the time.

Tim Pentreath

Weather, when and where to fly?

Weather forecasts are often (and unsurprisingly) inaccurate, but they still contain useful information. My paragliding trips are slowly becoming more successful i.e. when I head out I usually get to fly (although I might be able to do more). Here's the strategy I use:

1. Keep an eye on the 5-day forecasts and make a mental note of days that look potentially flyable. Rough guidelines are the BBC must forecast no rain (cloud is ok), and wind speed 5-10 mph. Weatherjack is extremely useful but remember he's only interested in thermals - not ridge soaring.
2. The day before check the BBC 24 hour forecast to check everything is roughly going to plan. Look at the synoptic charts up to 48 hours ahead - this will give you an idea of what the wind's going to do during the day (strengthen/drop/back/veer) so you can pick your site to maximise the time that it's "on" the hill and spot weather windows e.g. too strong during the day but probably nice in the evening or too light so need to get out in the early afternoon thermals. Some sites sea breeze and so can provide reliable soaring (but not thermals) at certain times of day.
3. On the day check the BBC forecast, Weatherjack and synoptics to confirm, and look at the actuals (www.xcweather.co.uk and Wendy Windblows). XC weather shows you what's going on across the country and has lots of weather stations so you can spot erroneous readings. However, the weather reports are from ground level (so add ~50% to get the windspeed on take off and modify direction slightly), some are marine buoys (which see a lot more wind), and can be up to 2 hours out of date. Wendy Windblows is hilltop data, but you need to be aware of local effects - some of the stations are sheltered in some wind directions and can be misleading.
4. Best of all, phone a friend on the hill or consult a local guru! It can be blown out where you are but flyable 10 miles away. If the wind is going to be light then choose a high site. If the wind is going to be strong or there's low cloud then choose a low one. Steep slopes work in a wider range of wind conditions than shallow ones. The actual reports combined with your forecast of how the wind is going to change allow you to choose a site that's going to work all day. If the wind direction is varying a lot then you might have to pick two close sites and expect to switch later in the day. It's good to have a big choice of sites. I'm a member of Mid Wales, Welsh Borders, and Long Mynd. The Mid Wales club (GBP10/year) is associated with the Welsh Free Flight Federation so I can fly most of the sites in Wales without paying daily membership fee - I have a choice of over 100 sites.

I hope this helps, and am interested to hear pearls of wisdom from others!

Tom Payne

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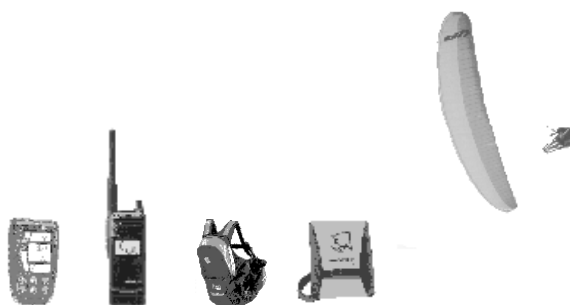
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Parannoyer & Hangups

Caption Competition

The photo for this caption competition was taken by the paparazzi at the Christmas Bash. Pete probably doesn't remember anything about it though. Send your captions to:

Caption Competition, Nova Magazine, 112 Prestbury Drive, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9LE.
email: nova@avonhgpg.co.uk.

The winner will receive a prize kindly donated by Par-Avion paragliding school.



Para-Wars: Battle of the Sexes

A little while ago Alex posted the following attack on the smartgroup with the title "This'll get me in trouble!". So in defense of all the female pilots in the club I decided to launch a public counter-attack. Ed.

"Paragliders vs. Women"

Paragliders don't get mad if you 'touch and go';

Paragliders don't object to a preflight inspection;

Paragliders come with manuals to explain their operation;

Paragliders have defined weight range;

Paragliders can be flown any time of the month;

Paragliders don't come with in-laws;

Paragliders don't care about how many other paragliders you have flown;

Paragliders don't mind if you look at other paragliders or buy magazines about them;

Paragliders don't comment on your piloting skills;

Paragliders can kill you quickly; a woman takes her time.

"Paragliders vs. Men"

Paragliders don't fart;

Paragliders don't belch;

Paragliders don't mind if you compare their statistics or performance with other paragliders;

Paragliders only take up one cushion on the sofa;

Paragliders don't look any different with 10kg extra ballast;

Paragliders don't need four remote controls.

Paragliders don't mind if you have a headache;

Paragliders don't mind if you don't play with them for a few months;

If Paragliders suddenly go all floppy they can pop back up again in seconds!

NOVA The Newsletter of the Avon Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club – www.avonhgpg.co.uk

If Undelivered please return to: The Membership Secretary, Avon HG&PG Club, c/o 22 New Road, Durrington, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 8EL