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The Avon HG & PG Club Magazine

October 2004



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Editorial



This is the quickest edition of Nova that I have ever put together since I have been the Editor. It was initially just going to be a flier to let you know about the forthcoming Annual General Meeting on Thursday 14th October, and the Westbury Litter Pick on Saturday 9th October (more details about both these events under the News section of this newsletter) but it has turned into a timely, although slightly thinner than usual, issue of Nova.

As usual thank you to all who have contributed. Keep sending your contributions, as I need regular news and features to make it worthwhile putting together. The next issue will be the January one, so put fingers to keyboard, or pen to paper before your flying experiences become a distant memory - it will give you something to do on those cold winter nights!

Cathy Lawrence

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

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Cover shot – Sheep at Westbury by Tony Moore

Chairman's Waffle

Well it's been a funny old summer really – there's been some great flying over the last few months but sadly not that much at weekends. The Avon PG BCC team are through to the finals again but sadly the weather hasn't been favourable yet so who knows when the final will eventually be held...



Having said that the weather played ball for the Mere Bash once again which helped make it a huge success, definitely the best in recent years. Thanks to everyone who helped make it such a great weekend – notably Gye, Simon and Dave for the effort they put in putting up the marquee and stage, everyone who helped take it down again on Sunday, and also to all those who made salads for everyone to enjoy. Thanks to Cathy and her friend (and Mark :-)) for the very entertaining belly-dancing during the "interval"! And of course thanks to Dave Coward for letting us use his field once again – instead of wanting any payment he just asks us to make a donation to charity – this year we'll be sending £100 to "Make a Wish" children's charity.

Talking of social events, the next big do will be the Christmas Dinner – more details will be announced soon, but it's likely to be on Thursday 9th or Friday 10th December – is everyone happy to go back to the Rockery, or do you fancy somewhere new? Please let us know...

At the next club meeting on October 14th we'll be holding the AGM, so this is your chance to get involved in the running of the club. Tony, Martin (and Amy) and Stephen are stepping down from the committee so the jobs of Membership Sec, PG Comps Sec and PG Low Airtime Contact are definitely up for grabs. If you fancy one of those jobs then please get in touch. The other committee members will be standing again, but if you think you could do a better job then please feel free to let yourself be known! It's pretty rare to need a vote to choose between people but it's not completely unknown! So thanks guys for the great jobs you've all done over the last twelve months (and longer), and thanks also to the rest of the committee of course for your sterling work...

And just in case this isn't enough of a draw we've got a speaker arranged - after the AGM Hugh Woodsend will be talking about gliding, including technology, meteorology, air law and the work of the airprox committee – it should be an interesting evening so do come along.

Well, I think that's about it for now, it's late on a Sunday evening and I need an early night! (who'd be the Chairman eh?). Hope to see lots of you on the 14th...

Tim Pentreath

The Avon Social Diary

We've had an excellent round of speakers and club meetings this summer! Those who missed the summer party because they wanted to watch England lose to Portugal frankly backed the wrong horse, as we had a great evening and an excellent quiz. We had a superb talk from Kaz Harland on how to beat your flying demons, and make sure you're not bombing out at 10km every time you realise you are going over the back. We also had a talk from Barry Pedersen, and anyone who wanted to know about flying in South Africa now has a detailed knowledge of the sites and setup in the Cape. Coming up over the next few months, we have the following events. Please do keep your eye on the website and smartgroups for any alterations and details. As usual, if you have any ideas for speakers, please do let us know.

Date	Event
Thursday 14 th October	Gliding: A talk from Hugh Woodsend on sailplane flying, and what it's like to have to avoid a sky full of paragliders behaving like barrage balloons.
Thursday 11 th November	Ballooning: Spot landing when you've got a fully controllable flying machine poses enough problems for most of us. Imagine what it's like trying to bring a hot air balloon into a small field without wiping out the livestock and hedges. Find out how they do it from Mark Shemilt, a professional pilot for Virgin.
December, date TBA	The Christmas Party! Likely to be at the Rockery in Bath, date TBA.
Wednesday 8th December	This is NOT a club event, but Bob Drury will be giving a lecture at Bristol Uni. Details on www.wildernesslectures.com

News

Notice of the forthcoming AGM on October 14th 2004

This is happening at the next club meeting, Thursday Oct 14th. This is your chance to get yourself more involved in the running of the club by volunteering for a post on the committee. You can put yourself forward for any position, but the following positions are being vacated:

Secretary:- Primary responsibilities are maintaining the membership database and being the point of contact for the club. You'll need to be computer literate and comfortable using excel. The busy period is renewals (March/April) but apart from that you will need to deal with about 5 or 6 membership applications per month. Help will always be on hand from the previous secretary, Tony Moore.

PG comps:- Basically this is managing the club's entry to the BCC. If you enjoy this competition and flying with/against new faces then this is the job for you. Big thanks to Martin and Amy for running this up till now

PG low airtime contact:- Remember what it was like turning up on the hill just after getting your CP? Well here's your chance to help those guys in that position. There is a list of low airtime pilots and coaches, this job entails putting them together on the right hill! Big thanks to Stephen Chiles who did a great job, emailing the list prior to every weekend with suggestions on where to fly.

Please consider volunteering, without a committee there would be no club. Remember that committee members get free membership!

More changes at Westbury...

The dust has settled after the fence saga, however it seems that more changes are likely.

A bit of Background: Wiltshire County Council control the area on the car park side of the access road, English Heritage control the area on the take-off side of the access road. The land is actually owned by the MOD. We have permission from WCC to use their bit of land, but permission has been neither granted nor denied from EH to use the take off side.

Maybe you've seen a mug-shot of the new Wiltshire County Council officer (Leo Wirtz) in the local papers. He is responsible for 9 WCC controlled open spaces, one of which is the top of Westbury white horse. I met
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him there (by accident) a few weeks ago and had quite an interesting chat. He is trying, together with English Heritage, to set up an "overall site management plan".

He is VERY pro our activities at Westbury. Part of his brief is to liaise with the users of these open spaces and try to get them involved with what goes on.

This is a golden opportunity for us to get involved with any discussions concerning the site, leading hopefully to a formal agreement from both parties allowing us use of the site. It has got to be better that we take this approach rather than deal with what they decide after the event.

The Avon committee have agreed that it would be a good idea for us to demonstrate our good intentions by offering the club's services regarding any site maintenance issues. This initially takes the form of a club litter pick....possibly followed by a scrub bashing session at a later date.

So, the date for your diaries is.....

Westbury Litter Pick Saturday Oct 9th at 9:30 am

Leo is very interested in this event, and has arranged to provide us with aluminium litter pick grabs and bin bags. I will try and get the local press there as well.

So, if you value the use of one of the best sites south of the M4, PLEASE show your support by turning up. It should only take an hour or two. If we can demonstrate to WCC and EH that our being there is an asset and we are useful to have on the hill it will help us secure the continued use of the site.

If you intend to come along please let me know so I can arrange the right number of grabs. Meet up at the car park.

Thanks
Tony

tony_moore@blueyonder.co.uk
01985 214579

Sad News

Avon Club paraglider pilot and Army Major, Colin Petchey was killed whilst on an adventure flying holiday to Chamonix with the ARMY/RAF. Colin's paraglider is reported to have suffered a serious collapse after flying from Annecy's 6000ft peak, Plan

Praz. Colin's wing apparently failed to recover and he died instantly on impact with the ground.

Colin was an enthusiastic paraglider pilot of two years' experience and flew with us at Westbury regularly as he based with the Army's Land Warfare Centre at Warminster. His aim was to become a civilian paragliding instructor on leaving the Army. He flew a new white and black Advance Epsilon wing and he often brought Buster, his little dog, when he flew at Westbury or Mere.

Those who met Colin will remember him for his enthusiasm and friendly optimistic attitude to flying, even in the face of endless days of parawaiting. Colin lived in Portsmouth with his wife, Tina and children Niall and Nathan. Army accident investigators have gone to Chamonix to determine how this tragic accident happened.

Bob Drury Talk

Some of you may know about the wilderness lectures run at Bristol University, basically they are a chance to hear about peoples adventures. On December 8th a certain Bob Drury is doing one of these lectures entitled "Why walk when you can fly". For those who are fans of Bobs its a chance to hear more about his adventures and for those that aren't its a chance to heckle!!!

More details on www.wildernesslectures.com

Club Coach Course

XClent Paragliding Tow Club are holding a BHPA club coach course on the weekend 20/21 of November. The venue will be somewhere in Cheltenham and a cost of around £35. A deposit of £10 is required if you are interested. This is a paragliding club but the course is for hang glider pilots as well. The BHPA would prefer a mixture of both disciplines. If interested email Brad or Colin at bradbayliss@fsmail.net or colin.hizzey@halliburton.com

PG XC and SIV Trips

For those that might be interested, Flybubble Paragliding still have some places left on the following paragliding coming XC trips and SIV courses, led by British Paragliding Team member and BHPA Senior Instructor of 10 years, Carlo Borsattino...

FLYBUBBLE SIV COURSE IN OLU DENIZ, TURKEY 25th Sept - 2nd October

1 week SIV and XC flying course in Oludeniz, Turkey

There are still some places left on our SIV and XC trip October 2004

to Oludeniz at the end of September 2004, with SIV instruction and XC flight guidance by Carlo Borsattino, British Team 2004. The SIV course will focus very much on the individual, with group sizes kept small, and aim to build a pilot's glider control skills and confidence, with an emphasis on a more personal instructor-student approach.

Cost: 400 pounds. ONLY A FEW PLACES LEFT!

FLYBUBBLE PERU - CHILE PARAGLIDING EXPERIENCE 30th October to 20th November 2004

Site and flight guidance by Spanish speaking Carlo Borsattino.

Three week 'X-ploration' trip, flying at the very best sites in Peru & Chile, fly-guided by Spanish speaking Carlo Borsattino, working together with local pilots. We will be flying in to Lima, in Peru, traveling down to world famous Iquique, in the Atacama Desert region of northern Chile, then working our way down to Santiago, visiting and flying the pick of the crop of Peruvian and Chilean flying sites along the way!

Cost: 1,300 pounds. ONLY TWO PLACES LEFT!

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA XC 4th - 18th December 2004

Two week advanced thermaling and XC flying trip, fly-guided by South African born Carlo Borsattino, with local pilots, flying at the best flying sites in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

Cost: 900 pounds. BOOK NOW FOR CHEAPER FLIGHTS!

For more info see:

http://www.flybubble.co.uk/xc_trips.asp

To find out more about Flybubble Paragliding's coming trips and courses, take a look at our brand new Flybubble Paragliding website: www.flybubble.co.uk

Or contact Carlo or Nancy on 01273 812 209 or info@flybubble.co.uk

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The Avon Aero-tow Group gets off the ground



Tony getting ready for his first tow

Aero-towing at the Mere Bash

Those of you who were at the Mere Bash this year may have noticed that although the weather was nice and sunny the singular lack of wind meant that soaring was a very difficult proposition. A few tried valiantly from the winch but their flights, although better than those who tried throwing themselves off various slopes, were very brief affairs.

Any keen Bash visitor who looked skyward would have no doubt noticed the many sailplanes cruising along beneath the clouds, but they might not have noticed that there were hang-gliders up there also. The more astute may have noticed the faint sound of a micro-light trike at intervals during the afternoon. If they had cared to search the sky for it, they would probably have noticed that it was being used to aero-tow hang-gliders in search of the plentiful thermals to be found on both Saturday and Sunday. Yes, the soaring was rather good, it just required a little help to get up to it.

Thanks to the generosity of the Rifle Range farmer, permission was granted to try aero-towing during the Bash from the field just to the north of the top track, opposite the top landing field. Although this field was not completely flat it proved ideal for aero-towing

experienced hang-glider pilots in the very light north and south winds over the Bash weekend.

The first tow was taken by Tony Moore to around 5000' amsl on his Eclipse, well above cloud-base, which at the time was below 3000' amsl. The plentiful gaps meant that flying above cloud was perfectly legal and safe and both pilots were rewarded with views of sun drenched cloud tops from horizon to horizon. During the following two days eight tows were made and every one resulted in the hang-glider pilots finding a good thermal that let them get up and away from the release point for a couple of hours of fun soaring. The release points varied between 1000' and 2000' above the take-off field. Why go to 2K when there is a big fat thermal rising nicely at 1K?

For those lucky enough to be aero-towing the weather during the Bash could not have been better. Things went so well that we have now asked for permission to try using the field on other light wind days. Permission has been granted, so we are up and running with the beginnings of the Avon aero-tow group.

What we need now is hang-glider pilots who are keen to join the group and be aero-towed in search of thermals. If you think that might be you then read the rest of this article and get in touch – NOW!

The Future

The Club

Just like the Mendip winch syndicate we'll be forming an aero-towing syndicate. This is required for so that various BHPA rules can be covered and so that we can have a core of pilots to help make things run smoothly.

The Tug

Ideally the aero-tow syndicate must own the tug. This is due to various rules mainly handed down from the CAA.



Chris in his Trike at the Mere Bash

The sites

OK so the Mere field isn't the perfect field but it is a start and will allow us to start towing. We still need to find other fields and it's all hands to the pumps here.

Any pilot who finds us a good field will be rewarded with 10 free 2000' tows! That's enough to get an aero-tow endorsement if you are not aero-tow rated already! So get looking in the club area.

Money

Yes, it is going to cost. We have the tug purchase, the towline, field rental(s), towing cart, tug hangar fees, fuel and tug maintenance fees to pay if we want to make this a reality. To start things off we'll need a start-up fee to buy essential equipment.

How much each member has to pay depends on how many members join the syndicate. We expect it to be slightly more than the winch syndicate, but we also expect to get much, much better flying!

Pilot Skills

The BHPA says that you must be pilot rated to aero-tow. This was done to appease the insurers, so if you are thinking of joining and are not rated go to the club theory lectures and take the pilot exams! You'll need a reasonable glider, something like a K4 is fine but a Calypso is too slow. Rigid wings are ideal, but any modern glider should be fine. To be able to tow you'll also need a BHPA aero-tow endorsement. If you haven't got one we'll be able to coach you so you can achieve the rating. It usually takes about 10 aero-tows to get an endorsement. If you can fly a trike, why not become a tug pilot? It really is great fun finding the perfect thermal to release the hang-glider into. If you have hours on a Pegasus XL you can become a tug pilot. You'll get lots of take-off and landing practice!

What to do now!

If you'd be interested in joining an Avon area aero-tow syndicate then phone Tony Moore 01985 214579 or Chris Jones 01225 319052.

We will be flying without you as we have a small group committed to making this happen, but a large group will help make things less expensive and more available. If you think you can't afford the joining fee but would like to aero-tow still get in touch. We hope to use a BHPA loan to spread the start-up fees out over a couple of years. This means that any start-up fee will probably be payable as a small amount each month rather than a one-off lump sum.

Now some of you are probably thinking. "I'll wait and see how they get on, I don't want to pay any monthly fees, I just want to turn up, pay and fly". Well so do we all! But in order for this to get going we need cash and pilots who are committed to make things happen. Yes we will probably be accepting weekend memberships, but the fees will be such that after 2 or 3 weekends of flying you'll be paying a lot more than syndicate members for your flying. Also if we don't get enough interested pilots the whole thing will never be more than a small cliché of pilots flying infrequently from secret fields.

The Avon Club has been slow to embrace aero-towing, mainly because it is hard to get a set-up organised. We have the opportunity now to do this and it might be our only chance.

Our target is to make the cost of a 2000' aero-tow about a fiver for syndicate members. It just has to be better than driving to the Blorenges on light wind weekends. Doesn't it?

Chris Jones

The Art of Parawaiting

By Liz Wood

The art of Para waiting (it must exist 'cos it was in my spell checker) has long been known to those who participate in paragliding and indeed in other aerial sports, perhaps even since the first days of paragliding.

The tradition is first passed onto the unsuspected bystander who inadvertently stares at the gliders and/or its pilot for some time without breathing. They then may just shrug their shoulders and walk off with that "I wish I had asked" look, or indeed come a little bit closer and offer words of "wow" "that looks good" "how do I...". Students and Novice pilots face parawaiting as a way to soak up the atmosphere and gain useful knowledge of this fantastic sport (that is the hang- and paragliding not the parawaiting!).

I was introduced to a new (OK I could be very much mistaken on this point - it may not be new at all) para waiting option. So I thought I would pass this on para waiting chapter. Perhaps other writers could add their own Para waiting chapters to Nova!

This particular event, involves a small ammunition of approximately 1cm (or about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch) in length (longer could be better but we will have to wait for an expert in this to write in with the finer details).

The ammunition should be "just so" sun baked (for maximum direction control - although the wetter can be used to maximize the surprise attack - but that leads us onto the other para waiting skill of cow-patt frisbee throwing). Points are scored of course with direct hits. The higher points go for location, hits to the face, of course mouth scores the highest.

There are, from my experience of watching this activity, no restrictions on collecting ammunition, nor indeed on the space between the two (or you could go for a multiple contest) participants. Participants should receive prior warning that they are participating (although once again this seemed to be confirmed by player one firing at player two, and player two responding with return fire).

Oh I forgot to tell you that the ammunition (well you guessed didn't you, didn't really need much help there I think), rabbit droppings!

Further details may be obtained from Matt and Hugo whom I believe are Gold and Silver medallists in this activity, closely followed by Alison's children Max and Poppy.

[P.S. There's plenty of ammunition at Westbury if Sheep droppings will do. Ed.]



Le Coup Icare

By Simon Kerr

I recently discovered this article hiding somewhere in the depths of my pc, needless to say it was meant to be published last year but somehow went astray. Anyway even a year late it still has something to say, so what the hell, here it is.....

If you like to keep abreast of what's new in the world of free flight, you enjoy a good spectacle, and wouldn't pass up a good party (or several of them), then you should really consider visiting the Coup Icare at St Hilaire. If you can imagine combining the Telford show, the Mere Bash and the Blorengre Party all together, then you still wouldn't even come close to what must be the biggest and best free flight extravaganza of the year. This year I dropped in for the weekend and discovered what a great event it is, and was very surprised to see so few Brits there, something I think ought to be remedied in years to come.

My purpose for visiting was two fold, partly being research into a possible future move to sunny climes, as a consequence I did miss out on some of the action during the daytime. In particular the fancy dress flying which the Coup Icare is best known, a demonstration of a winged jump suit, a helicopter drop off a paraglider, and several other flying escapades. I did however find time to watch the daily acro displays from the Renegades, the SAT team and various other gung ho pilots, all of which went on in the middle of the biggest bun fight you have ever seen. An impressive aerobatics display by someone with a very strong stomach in a small (honestly it wasn't a model Charlie) stunt plane, left everyone suitably open-mouthed.

One or two points that may be of interest to future visitors: I arrived after dark on the first day and soon discovered that the municipal campsite is 30% level ground and 70% steep slopes. There are plenty of extra camping fields
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provided for the event, but they are equally challenged in the flat ground stakes, suffice to say the only flat bit I could find was about ½ a tent's worth. So if you intend to camp arriving the day before is not a bad idea if you want a comfortable night. There is a wide variety of food available at the event and needless to say alcohol too, but be prepared to queue to buy tickets before you queue to buy food or drink. This was obviously an attempt to control the handling of money, but very quickly became a real pain, particularly when I discovered that tickets bought in one beer tent were not valid in the other DOH!!! Oh, and if you don't want to scare yourself, then leave your glider at home. Flying in crowded airspace is hazardous enough without certain mad men doing helicopters, SATS, tumbles and loops in the middle of the gaggle.



On the first night I was coerced into drinking rather too much green beer (yes I do mean green) at the Skyline party, this took place in what can only be described as the PARTY tent situated on the decollage sud. Needless to say the Friday night Aerodyne party and Saturday night's Ozone party also took place in this tent. Obviously for my research purposes it was vital that I attended all these parties, and I can attest to the quality of the entertainment provided. Live music, fire juggling and breathing, candle lit paper hot air balloons, free booze courtesy of Ozone and even an unannounced night-time acro display above the marquee on the Saturday night. Those Rodrigues brothers really are mad! The question is, can you handle three very late night parties (the Ozone bash went on till 6:30 am) on consecutive nights. I'm afraid I bailed out early on the third night, just can't keep that kind of pace up any longer.

Of course a large part of the whole event is the trade show. This was free to enter on the Thursday and Friday, but 5 euros at the weekend. As a trade show it was very good, with most if not all of the manufacturers present plus much more. There were also a number of bargains to be had if you searched hard. I bought myself a new full-face helmet for 79 euros (about £50). There were demo gliders available to test fly, gliding simulators to play on and lots of interesting stuff to tempt and entertain. The boy's from Brazil on the Sol stand did a roaring trade in free Margaritas, which guaranteed a big crowd. The next biggest crowd was at the Ozone stand, which was also dishing out free punch loaded with Tequila, s'funny how shallow we all are eh!!! There was a large second hand glider mart, which seemed very popular. You deposit your glider and fill out an advert form, which costs 8 euros. The ad gets posted and you leave them to it, they will supervise its inspection by interested parties and sell it on for you if they can. The whole thing will eventually cost you 10% of your asking price if it sells, but it's very well run and all the gliders are kept secure, leaving you to get out and about and enjoy the show.

Finally there's the film festival, entry to which is once again free at certain times. I didn't see any of this year's offerings, partly due to other commitments but also down to not wanting to sit in a rather hot blacked out marquee when the weather was so nice and the acro displays so entertaining. During the evenings when the best and latest films were being show and entry was charged for, I was under obligation to check out the aforementioned parties, so would have been shirking my responsibilities to have gone to the cinema instead. In fact this does seem to be one of the problems associated with the Coup Icare in general, that is there really is not enough time to do and see everything that is going on. One thing is sure, you will be entertained, whether you like it or not.

If you haven't already experienced a good French festival, then do yourself a favour and make a promise to visit the Coup Icare before too long. I promise you will have the time of your life, and you may be surprised to find out how much the French love to party.

The Coupe Icare is usually held over 3 days on the third weekend of September. so have just missed it this year. Tony and I went 2 years ago and agree that it is a lot of fun. and Simon is not exaggerating about the campsite, or anything else!

Ed.

THE MERE BASH 2004 PHOTO GALLERY



The Avon XC Files - www.avonpgxc.co.uk

2004 PG XC League (most recent flight - 15/9/04)

Rank	Name	Glider	1	2	3	4	5	6	Flights	Top 6	Av Top 6	All	Av All
1	Alex Coltman	Airwave Magic	100.0	88.1	68.8	45.6	42.0	34.9	9	379.4	63.2	448.3	49.8
2	Jim Mallinson	Gradient Avax RSE	79.6	78.5	72.4	48.8	47.7	45.6	11	372.5	62.1	533.6	48.5
3	Garry Sandell	Ozone Vulcan	100.9	44.6	35.8	33.0	32.1	30.6	13	277.0	46.2	433.4	33.3
4	Wayne Seeley	Advance Omega 5	60.4	55.7	41.1	24.8	19.2	18.6	9	219.8	36.6	269.3	29.9
5	Ken Wilkinson	Ozone Vibe	60.2	37.4	35.3	31.3	25.4	21.6	11	211.2	35.2	286.7	26.1
6	Stafford Evans	Gradient Aspen	57.9	54.1	30.8	22.0	14.0	10.4	8	189.2	31.5	203.8	25.5
7	Tim Pentreath	Advance Omega 5	49.3	28.3	27.6	24.4	18.3	17.5	6	165.4	27.6	165.4	27.6
8	Graham Richards	Gradient Aspen	47.0	25.3	23.1	18.7	14.9	10.7	7	139.8	23.3	146.8	21.0
9	Fiona Macaskill	Advance Omega 5	45.1	41.9	30.4	10.5			4	127.9	32.0	127.9	32.0
10	Alan Davis	Gradient Saphir	67.5	33.2	15.7	9.4			4	125.9	31.5	125.9	31.5
11	Pete Douglas	Windtech Synchro	26.8	26.4	23.1	17.9	13.5	13.5	7	121.3	20.2	131.4	18.8
12	Hugo Makin	Gradient Aspen	25.7	23.3	22.9	21.8	18.3		5	112.0	22.4	112.0	22.4
13	Stephen Chiles	Ozone Vulcan	59.4	29.3	11.7	11.6			4	112.0	28.0	112.0	28.0
14	Richard Harding	Airwave Magic	52.0	49.9	8.5				3	110.3	36.8	110.3	36.8
15	Richard Zaltzman	Swing Mistral 2	24.7	23.8	18.0	17.2	16.2		5	99.9	20.0	99.9	20.0
16	Robin Brown	Gradient Aspen	35.9	27.2	22.1	13.9			4	99.1	24.8	99.1	24.8
17	Tony Moore	Nova X-Ray	40.9	30.7	13.8	10.1			4	95.4	23.9	95.4	23.9
18	Will Price	Gin Bandit	80.1						1	81.0	81.0	81.0	81.0
19	Peter Taylor	Gradient Aspen	38.8	14.1					2	52.9	26.5	52.9	26.5
20	Howard Woodward	Gradient Aspen	25.4	11.6	7.2	4.9			4	49.1	12.3	49.1	12.3
21	Mike Coupe	Ozone Vulcan	26.0	23.1					2	49.1	24.5	49.1	24.5
22	Mark Norley	Airwave Wave	27.7	16.9					2	44.6	22.3	44.6	22.3
23	Mike Humphries	UP Kantega	44.5						1	44.5	44.5	44.5	44.5
24	Martin Stanton	UP Trango	35.4						1	35.4	35.4	35.4	35.4
25	Morgan Nicholas	Nova Aeron	18.8	13.6					2	32.4	16.2	32.4	16.2
26	Iain MacKenzie	Airwave Sport	23.4	5.6					2	29.0	14.5	29.0	14.5
27	Cath Hutchinson	Edel Atlas	25.7						1	25.7	25.7	25.7	25.7
28	Mike Rossdale	Advance Epsilon 4	14.1	9.6					2	23.7	11.8	23.7	11.8
29	Paul Guilfoyle	Swing Arcus	15.2	7.9					2	23.1	11.6	23.1	11.6
30	Richard Hellen	Ozone Vibe	14.1						1	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1
31	Stephen & Lisa	Gradient Onyx	9.8						1	9.8	9.8	9.8	9.8
32	Mike Andrews	Gradient Aspen	9.3						1	9.3	9.3	9.3	9.3
33	Martin Nichols	Airwave Sport 2	8.4						1	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4
34	Simon Kerr	Gradient Saphir	6.9						1	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9
Grand Total			1358.0	799.9	508.4	365.7	261.6	203.5	141	3497.1	30.7	4040.2	28.7

After such a good year in 2003, can 2004 be any better...?

Sorry for the long lack of updates here - holidays, Mere Bash etc... What I can say is that there has been some excellent flying recently, though precious little at weekends. We're only a few hundred km off last year's record breaking total, and I've still got some more flights to log - I'm just querying a few coordinates. So I think there's every chance we can do better than last year! Go for it!!!

Tim P 18/9/2004

05/07/04 - Jim Mallinson, 79.6km from Westbury

TO: Westbury ST 899 516 at 1520
TP: Bere Regis SY 853 949
LZ: Swanage SZ 016 791 at 1910
Glider: Gradient Avax RSE 26

I didn't even think about going flying until about one o'clock and then headed down to Westbury with no big plans - maybe a little out and return if I was lucky. It was very cyclic - I picked up Sam Moffet from the bomb-out field on the way - and my first attempt had me side-landing below the NNE take-off. Next time was better: up to about 2500' and out over the chimney. Got nothing but on the way back stumbled into a lovely 3m/s climb. That got me to near base at about 4500' and I pushed forward again, this time towards Westbury. I didn't lose much on the glide but realised that there was a significant headwind, so made up my mind to tootle off downwind.

It was almost four o'clock, so I didn't have great expectations but the sky was looking better and better all the time. I got another climb just downwind of Westbury but left it at about 4000' because it was taking me towards the danger zone. I headed off along the A350 and over Warminster, where I got up again. I hopped from cloud to cloud but was getting my timing wrong and was down to about 2000' near the lake at Tisbury. Some bimbbling in a zero and a desperate dash over Wardour Castle had me at ridge level on the north facing escarpment with the regimental badges just south of the A30.

I waved at a couple of farm workers who were at my height in a field on top of the ridge and thought it was all over when I spotted a couple of buzzards screaming up out of a small bowl about 500m to my west. Thinking I wouldn't get there with enough height to do anything I headed over, but to my delight I maintained what precious height I had and then connected with a beautiful strong climb that had me up at a 5800' base at the beginning of a street. Things were looking up. At this point I realised I'd have to track a bit more East to avoid Bournemouth so when I got to the end of the street I turned right towards Blandford. I was clear of airspace but the climbs were getting weaker and I was soon gliding towards Bere Regis, picking out a place to land.

It was 6.30 and I was already very surprised to have got as far as I had. I went along the edge of a wood and was down to about 400' agl when I stumbled into another ripper. Small and snotty, it tried to get rid of me but I clung on and it slowly got bigger and smoother and I was singing to myself as I drifted along in a 2-up, now on a SE track and heading towards Wareham. Another look at the map had me avoiding Bovington and some weird danger zones that extend in from the sea.

At about 3500' I set off on glide from above Wareham. It suddenly got strangely rough and I wondered if my 20kph tailwind was going to turn into a sea breeze. But it didn't, and I arrived over Corfe Castle at 7 o'clock with about 1500' to play with. A few turns in the last lift of the day and I turned towards Swanage. Nervous of landing in rotor on the other side of town - I couldn't see what was there - I put her down in a strong (at least 30kph) wind with a very big grin on my face. It was even bigger when Sean Cunningham said he'd come and get me, and I spent a couple of happy hours in the pub waiting for him.

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.

Register at www.smartgroups.com/groups/avonhgpg

Pre-PWC Bir-Billing

October 28th - 31st 2003



Over the back – Photo by Xavier Murillo

Jim Mallinson originally wrote this article for Cross Country magazine but it was never published as unfortunately the photos didn't turn up in time. Thanks to Jim for sharing it with the Nova readers.

Imagine trying to tell the inhabitants of a small town in Europe that for four days the electricity is going to be turned off just in case one of the competitors in a paragliding competition crashes into power lines. It could only happen in India. After the success of last year's "Pre-Pre-PWC" the authorities threw their full weight behind this year's Pre-PWC event, in the hope that sooner or later Bir-Billing might be deemed a suitable location for a World Cup. When the lumbering beast that is the Indian bureaucracy wakes up and lurches into action there are usually a few oversights, and unfortunately several pilots were deterred from coming by their applications not being answered. This and the lack of free flights for foreign pilots meant that numbers were down on last year's event, with only fourteen from abroad and thirteen Indians.

Those who did make it, however, were treated to a fantastic event. After four days of flying the pilots were complaining of exhaustion. Not surprising, considering that almost everyone had flown more than 300km and spent at least four hours in the air every day. The conditions, while not epic, were perfect for October 2004

racing. Cloud-base varied from 2300m to 3200m and the strongest thermals were about 5m/s. The task setting committee (Xavier Murillo, local guru Bruce "Director-ji" Mills, Debu Choudhury, Adie Kumar and Gurpreet Dhindsa) sensibly restricted the tasks to the main ridge of the Dhauladhar to avoid potential retrieve nightmares. Thermals were easy to find on the spurs running down from the ridge and after the third task Mathieu Vermeil (France, Advance Omega 5) was heard to complain that it was too easy. Indeed, bomb-outs were rare and it was only the length of the tasks that stopped pilots from making goal. The key to success was to choose the best route across the spurs and go as fast as possible without making any mistakes. If you did land out, there was nothing to worry about; by the time you had put your glider away, chatted to the inevitable crowd of kids and shared your packed lunch with them, the retrieve crew (which outnumbered the pilots by four to one!) would have tracked you down.

The competition got off to a suitably auspicious start with a Hindu priest making ritual fire offerings and

chanting vedic mantras on take-off. The assembled dignitaries and pilots were then adorned with garlands of marigolds before proceeding to the briefing. The task-setting committee called a 63km race to goal with turn-points at Palampur and Jogindernagar. The late start and weak conditions meant that only three pilots made it into goal. Nikolay Shorokhov (Russia, Gin Boomerang 3), who had only arrived in Bir late the previous night, was first, but only just made it in. Those who witnessed his final glide were incredulous; he had mistakenly thought that the goal field altitude was 500m (it is in fact 1400m), and left on glide accordingly. He estimated his glide angle to have been better than 15:1...into a gentle headwind! More weight to the microlift theory, perhaps. Next into goal was Xavier (France, Gin Bonanza), followed by Debu (India, Mac Sense).

On day two the air looked clearer and the task setters were more optimistic. Some pushed for 100km and they were right; a 75k task was set and everybody made goal! The smiles in the goal-field told the story. Dilip Kotecha (India, UP Kantega) was ecstatic after his longest ever flight; Aidan Toase (UK, Windtech Quarx 2) said that it was the best flying he had ever experienced. Nikolay was again first, by a bigger margin this time, followed by Adie (India, Gin Boomerang 3). The perfect racing conditions made for some heart-stopping finishes; after racing on full speed-bar from the last turn-point, I just pipped Xavier and Anja Kroll (Germany, Gin Oasis) to third place. Debu and Mathieu had both got stuck at different points on the course (Mathieu getting up from 100m above the valley floor) and raced in together; despite a major blowout on full speed-bar, Debu squeaked in ahead.

We knew that the task-setters would not let us off lightly when day three dawned clearer still, and sure enough a 112km elapsed time race was called. It was effectively an out-and-return, with the far turn-point at McLeod Ganj, where the Dalai Lama, the fugitive spiritual leader of Tibet, lives in exile. Ever alert to the possibilities of a world record, Fiona Macaskill (UK, Advance Omega 5), had her cameras and forms ready for an attempt on the women's out and return distance record, which currently stands at just over 100km. Conditions were the strongest yet and the convection made for powerful breezes around some of the spurs. Pilots had to push along to the bowls that were facing the sun before being rocketed up to cloud-base. Every day of the competition birds marked many of the thermals, but on this day there seemed to be more than ever. Besides the usual Himalayan Griffin Vultures, there were Golden Eagles, Lammergeiers, Kites, Steppe Eagles and Egyptian Vultures. Several pilots reported being followed or even escorted along the course. Some had their canopies dive-bombed twice, on glide. I felt what seemed like a major symmetric deflation from nowhere, only to look up and see a vulture's bald head peering down from in front of

my leading edge.

The length of the task meant that for all but the very fastest there was never going to be any point in choosing a start time - getting as far round the course as possible was what mattered. Nikolay started flying more tactically today; he took the start gate a few minutes after the lead gaggle, caught them up and then broke away with Xavier. The two of them flew together for most of the course, Xavier taking photos of Nikolay and Nikolay filming Xavier. After the last turn-point Nikolay pulled ahead and sped off into goal. Behind them were Adie Kumar and Masaya Fokunaga (Japan, Advance Omega 5), struggling at the last turn-point, which was the funicular railway station perched above Jogindernagar at an altitude of 2800m. This is where Xavier Remond launched in 1992 to set the world out and return distance record of 134km. Adie and Masaya had been a good ten minutes ahead of the next pilots but were joined by them underneath the turn-point. It looked dire; the sun was getting low and the day seemed over. Then a griffin vulture appeared from nowhere, marking the core of a 3m/s climb, which gave five whooping pilots enough height to dart in and take the turn-point before leaving on death glides in the direction of goal. None made it. The bulk of the remainder of the field couldn't get the turn-point and landed near the competition HQ in Jogindernagar, exhausted after five and a half hours in the air, but elated after completing what was for many their first 100km flight. Fiona was one of those who couldn't quite make the last turn-point; she just missed the world record, but it can't be long before she or some similarly determined woman breaks it from Billing.

We weren't the only ones having a good time in the Indian Himalaya that day. While we were enjoying good racing conditions (under a cloud-base that varied between 3000m near the start to less than 2400m at McLeod Ganj, in the drier air 60km north at Keylong), Bob Drury and Ulric Jessop were taking their Ozone Vulcans up to a 7200m cloud-base!

The next morning conditions were still excellent but as it was the last day the committee called a relatively short 75km task. The crux was the last turn-point; an antenna opposite take-off, on a low ridge, a few kilometres out in front of the main ridge. The cumulus clouds were a lot more extensive today and the darker bases marked the lines of lift. Those who took advantage of this could race even faster than the previous days, stopping to climb only when absolutely necessary. The penultimate turn-point was a pond on top of the main ridge, about 5km beyond Jogindernagar, which Xavier described during his briefing as "the most beautiful turn-point in the world". The ridge gradually descends as it turns south east and drops into the valley wind, which made for another change of tactics: one had to go fast along the top of the ridge and not bother to stop to climb. The return leg from the turn-point had a significant

headwind, and for the first time in the competition the performance advantage of the faster wings made a big difference. Nikolay, Adie and Debu pulled away. Nikolay steamed into goal before the other two for another convincing win, making it four out of four, a first in a World Cup event. Xavier and I were neck and neck one ridge back from take-off. Xavier chose to take the same route as the first three and went for the direct glide to the antenna; I wanted to make sure of goal and continued on to the take-off ridge where I got to base before setting off across the valley. Xavier was unlucky and landed a few hundred metres short of goal; I made it easily but was just behind Masaya who had gone for the direct route and found a climb above the antenna. Soon after we landed a small patch of cirrus obscured the sun, shutting off the lift and dashing the hopes of those still in the air. Most were forced to go on death glides from low above the antenna, and none made it. Unfortunately Keiko Hiraki (Japan, Windtech Syncro) tried to glide one terraced field too far and had a hard downwind landing, breaking her ankle.

The competition was over, with a worthy winner in Nikolay. First woman and fifth overall was Anja Kroll (Germany, Gin Oasis), a name to remember. In only her third year of flying she beat many seasoned competitors on her DHV 1/2 wing. During the run-up to the competition she had trained hard, flying with great determination and guts – one day she completed the daunting 50km flight to Manali, crossing a 4000m+ pass along the way. At the end of every day of the competition pilots could be heard complaining that despite flying faster wings they could not shake her. It was a very impressive performance.

The event doubled as the Indian National Championship, which was won by Adie Kumar. Debu Choudhury, last year's champion, was in second place. The standard of all the Indian pilots was excellent. Two years ago few had made any cross-country flights; this year they were tough competitors. Adie and Gurpreet organised a training camp before the event which was very helpful for those new to competitions. Perhaps Vinay and Ajay Sharma (Advance Sigma 4 and Windtech Quarx 2), brothers from Manali, could have done with attending - despite flying well they were let down by GPS errors. They put their flying skills down to what they call "IPS", the Indian Paragliding System. The guru of this technique is fellow Manali-wallah Roshan Lal Thakur (Ozone Octane). He explained it to me in detail. The key is to refrain from flying: you sit around all year drinking chai and talking bullsh*t, and then fly a blinder when the competition comes along. Roshan came a very creditable third! Hot on his heels was Gurpreet Dhindsa (Airwave Magic 3). Bir locals Jyoti Thakur (Advance Epsilon 3) and Nico Avasthi (Ozone Octane) put in strong performances to finish fifth and sixth, closely followed by Sanjay Pendurkar (Windtech Quarx) from Bombay.

That night there was a cultural evening of traditional

Himachali dancing, by the end of which everyone was strutting their stuff to the strains of the tabla and the horn, in marked contrast to the next night, when DJ Noshier from Pune had the pilots hopping to his own eclectic blend of "commercial remix trance". Bir had never seen anything like it!

Overall the event was a huge success. Any problems with the organisation were largely due to over-organisation: the amount of money, time and manpower that Himachal Tourism threw at the competition was flabbergasting. Just as he did last year, Xavier Murillo, the technical director of the event, was able to cut through the chaos and keep everything running smoothly in his inimitable style. Thanks are due to him, Adie and Gurpreet for their hard work in making the pilots' voices heard above the clamour!

Pre-PWC Results

- 1 Nikolay Shorokhov Russia Gin Boomerang 3
- 2 Adie Kumar India Gin Boomerang 3
- 3 Xavier Murillo France Gin Bonanza
- 4 Jim Mallinson UK Ozone Vulcan
- 5 Anja Kroll Germany Gin Oasis
- 6 Debu Choudhury India Mac Sense
- 7 Mathieu Vermeil France Advance Omega 5
- 8 Keiko Hiraki Japan Windtech Syncro
- 9 Roshan Lal Thakur India Ozone Octane
- 10 Gurpreet Dhindsa India Airwave Magic 3

Women

- 1 Anja Kroll Germany Gin Oasis
- 2 Keiko Hiraki Japan Windtech Syncro
- 3 Louise Burnham UK Gin Gangster

For information on this year's event, email tourism@hp.nic.in or check the PWC website (www.pwca.org).

Accommodation in Bir can be arranged through the Emaho Café (email Tsering on tseringgyaltsen@rediffmail.com) or through Sian Everingham and Debu Choudhury (www.dreamandadventure.com, email sianeve@rediffmail.com).

I'll be there, again. In fact we've rented a house there for the next two years. Not going to live there full time but at 30 quid a month it's a bargain.

At the moment the comp is full, with 65 pilots. I'm pretty sure though that if you were to turn up you'd be able to get a place because there are always a few people who don't make it. If you are going to go and can spare the time you might as well stay longer. The best flying is usually between mid-Oct and mid-Nov, so it would be best to get there before the comp.

Jim Mallinson



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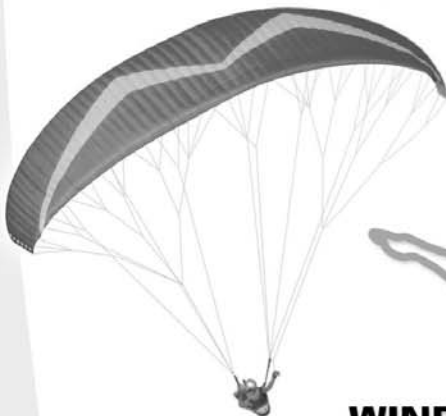
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