



NOVA

The Magazine of the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

If undelivered please return to:
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On the cover: Coming into goal at the 2005 pre-PWC at Billing. Photo: Jim Mallinson.

Editorial

Well, that's enough editing for this issue I think. If you've ever wondered what the Nova Editor does, it's simply a process of arranging the copy so that it occupies a multiple of four sides. It makes it nice and pretty for those of you who prefer the feel of paper between your fingers, you see. Anyway, as a result of my fruitless wait (you know who you are!) for the article that was going to give me exactly the number of pages I needed, this May issue seems to have turned into the June issue. What I need is for some clever scientist to invent one-sided paper. But I don't think anything has gone out of date, apart from Chairman Zaltzman's comments about the appalling weather - suddenly summer seems to have arrived, and this weekend may even see a successful BCC round!

So to remind you those distant days when the weather stopped you flying, two of the articles this time have little to do with aviation. I hope you find them interesting – they give a flavour of what some of the club's members get up to when they are not obsessing about flying. Mike Andrews tells how Governador Valadares provided fulfilment of a lifelong non-flying ambition, and he reveals that he has taken over from Simon Kerr as Club Jeweller. And Tony Moore describes his uphill-skiing trip, and he reveals his ambition never to do something so knacker-ing ever again. I'd like to include this sort of thing from time to time, so if you have a secret non-flying vice, please write about it; I think our readers would find it very interesting. Of course I always welcome feedback, so if you can think of nothing worse, please let me know so that your opinions can be filed appropriately.



But there is also plenty of flying-related stuff in this issue for all you traditionalists. We have a couple of articles that should heighten your safety awareness, both when flying in the UK and when abroad in mountain conditions. Chris Jones looks back to a day at Westbury earlier this year, when scratchy conditions led to some close-combat flying. Chris asks us to think carefully about how we behave in such conditions, and gives some very pragmatic advice for staying out of trouble and making the flying more enjoyable for everyone. And anyone planning to fly in mountains this year would do well to read Nick Somerville's article. Nick recalls a flight in the French Alps that taught him a valuable lesson about how quickly conditions can change in the mountains.

Alex Coltman has also done us proud again this time. He's written a very comprehensive article on competition flying. If you want to know the ins and outs of competitions of any level, it's all there.

And of course, we have all the regular bits and pieces, including the caption competition. We had some good entries this time, and there's another photo for you to apply your wit and ingenuity to. That reminds me, I need more caption comp photos, so if you have any photos of our flying buddies in compromising circumstances, please send them to me.

Anyway, thanks very much to everyone who has contributed to Nova this time, and also to Tony Moore, Cathy Lawrence and sprogs for doing the licking and sticking on this and previous issues.

Remember to fly in a manner commensurate with the prevailing conditions.

Richard

Photo: Tim Pentreath

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 those of the Committee of the Club.

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

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Chairman's Chunter

Crikey, it's time for Nova again! Unrelenting pressure from Avon's freeflying Rupert Murdoch in waiting has borne fruit once again, and we have another excellent edition hot off the press for you to enjoy.

Normally at this time of year, there are a flurry of cross countries to rave about, and in past years that has really meant across-the-country, with Frocester in May proving very productive. However, as the rain lashes down biblically outside and the train I am on crawls along because there are fish on the line, that warm grassy smell of a May thermal seems to be a very distant memory.

However, even in the midst of this drought, by which I presume they are referring to flyable weekends, our hardy club members have been out and about. Only this week, an intrepid crew are braving the rain and winds in Snowdonia, and somehow sneaked some flying in whilst those of us back home are pumping out flooded garden sheds and applying a liberal coat of No More Nails to the roof to prevent tile loss in the howling gales.

Since the arrival of our daughter Isobel in March, the priorities have changed a great deal. What used to be the paraglider and general stuff storeroom is now her nursery, with the wings relegated to the cupboard under the stairs. Weather forecasting is something done whilst watching News 24 in the middle of the night, and since I have not quite mastered the art of holding a baby and using a computer at the same time, even WeatherJack gets to me by word of mouth rather than the altogether more accurate web. But 12 weeks into fatherhood, the itch is starting to return, and our summer holiday happens to be a week in a cottage at the foot of the Long Mynd!

Despite the weather, there has actually been a fair bit of activity on the Flying Diary and PGXC. The WeatherJack 5 in April caused a flurry of activity and some very excited posting on our Yahoo Group. Mike Andrews, Rob Kerslake and Ken Wilkinson battled it out from Leckhampton, landing within a kilometre or so of each other at 50km. Ken got the furthest by a hair's breadth, but Mike definitely played the ace on the retrieve by flashing his bus pass and getting a free ride home! The following day Jim doubled that for 100km, with Wayne, Alex, Jo, Sarah W, Tim, Pete D, and Morgan all posting good flights this year.

Unfortunately it has not been an entirely incident-free spring, with a bit of cracked calcium showing up around the club, but luckily nothing too serious. Given the current run of poor form battering us from the Atlantic, and rusty types like me still waiting for a decent day after a long layoff, that first sunny weekend is likely to be rather busy. We are all jostling in the queue for takeoff on Mere or Westbury, with weeks or months of pent up frustration waiting to be relieved by that uplifting waft. It is either too light or too strong, and everyone just wants to get off and try to catch up with that first gaggle who snuck away on the only decent thermal of the day half an hour ago (Ken – It's very annoying when you do that).

However, please take it easy, especially when it is marginal. It is those days when I find myself muttering "come on you b***..." under my breath whilst wondering whether I will clear the wing laid out in front of me and the get a slot in the rather packed airspace on the next cycle, only to bugger up my launch or spend a sweaty few minutes scratching before scraping in to land. Chris Jones has written an excellent article below, encapsulating the issues that overcrowding, marginal conditions and rusty pilots can create.

Please do take the time to think about this next time you are cursing at the medley of "nutters" around you or wishing that the five gliders on take off would just get on with it and join the 30 in the air to give you a chance to take off. Your safety is paramount, and if you're in plaster or worse, you won't be flying for the rest of the season. Not only that, but it would only take one serious accident to lose a sensitive site like Westbury, so please fly sensibly and with consideration for everyone else. Should you find yourself gritting your teeth and trying to find a small patch of sky to make your own, remember that the reason we are all there is to enjoy it, and we all need the fix as much as each other.

Enough preaching, I need to thank the excellent contribution that you have made to your club, starting with everyone who has contributed to this Nova (apologies if Richard D threatened you, but he gets the job done). Also, thanks to your committee for keeping it all going, arranging the socials, the comps, keeping the website up, managing the sites and the membership, running PGXC, keeping our finances on a even keel, posting low airtime briefings and keeping you stocked with videos. What more could you possibly ask for?! Suggestions to the editor, and remember we're a flying club.

Well that's more than enough of my ramblings, all that remains is to remind you to put the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd September in your diaries for the Mere Bash and to wish you all safe flying.

Richard

News

The Bath Gap

From August 2006, if you expect to fly XC over Bath you will need to check whether the so-called "Bath Gap" has been activated. The Bath Gap is a block of airspace between 3,500' and 4,500' above Bath within the new Bristol CTA-3 controlled airspace (3,500'-FL105), which cannot be flown through unless it has been activated. Further details, with maps showing the boundary of the Bath Gap, will appear in the next issue of Nova.

Avon photo/video gallery archive

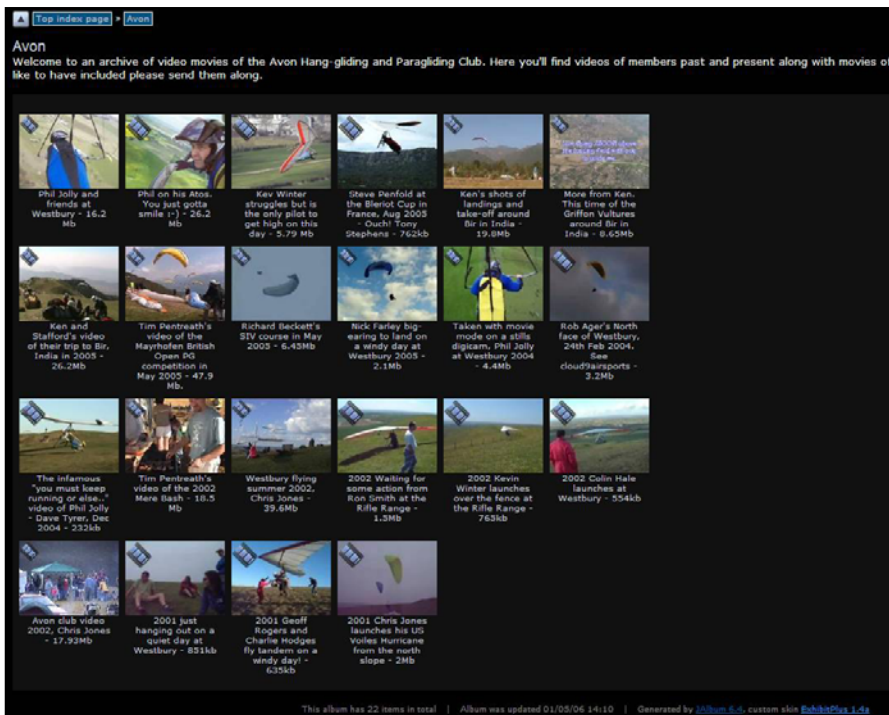
Chris Jones has been running a web-based photo archive of the Avon Club for about a year. He needs more of your photos and videos!

So far I have collected 800 still pictures dating from the late 70's to the present day. A big thanks to those who have contributed so far! Earlier this year I started to include movies also.

The archive is intended to be an ongoing thing so I'm always after more stuff to put in it. So if you've got any photos or videos, old or new, don't be shy; send them along. They don't have to be works of art, they just have to capture what being in the Avon club is all about.

So far there are pictures from just about every site, shots from trips abroad and pictures taken whilst on XC. More are needed.

Nowadays most people take digital snaps so they are easy to send along. Just email them to me at photo@hgpg.co.uk. Larger stuff like videos or zip archives can be sent using an intermediary service such as <http://www.yousendit.com> (you upload it to them, they notify me and I download it from them, all free). If that doesn't work for you, write them to a CD-ROM and post them to me at 20 Blenheim Gardens, Bath, BA1 6NL.



If you have prints, slides, negatives or VHS videotapes I can digitise them for you before I put them on the website.

Digital videos can be in just about any format you like. I can leave them in their original format or convert them to the Microsoft WMV format, which can be read by the majority of Windows users without having to download any extra software.

Whatever you send, it would be great to know: When they were taken, where they were taken, and who is in them, plus any background information you'd like to supply.

The photo gallery can be found here:

<http://www.hgpg.co.uk/Galleries/Avon>

and the videos here:

<http://www.hgpg.co.uk/videogalleries/Avon>

If you know of any ex-members of the club who have pictures dating back a few years it would be great if you could let them know about the archive and encourage them to send in a contribution or two.

Finally, if you have a web site yourself with pictures of Avon Club flying then let me know and I'll include a link to it.

I should say that my site is not endorsed by the club as an official Avon web site, but I can assure everybody that I don't make any money from it and the photos and videos on it will always remain the property of their owners, credit is always given!

Many-faceted Flying

Mike Andrews started making model planes at the age of 8, first soloed a basic bungee-launched glider at 15 at school, went solo in a Tiger Moth (biplane) thanks to a RAF Flying Scholarship at 18, and has messed around in aeroplanes of one sort or another ever since. Usually he was filming from them rather than flying them because he couldn't afford the latter. He was lucky that in 23 years working as a TV Producer/Director for the BBC he got to fly in a lot of very interesting and unusual places, like White Island volcano in New Zealand, the high Himalayas, Cape Horn, the desert in flower in Chile, Ethiopia, China, deep in the Grand Canyon, etc. He first saw a paraglider in 1988 at Chamonix - and immediately took a tandem flight. Mike's paragliding has also taken him to Governador Valadares, and here he describes his fascination with the local bling.

Mike's article is reprinted here with thanks to XC Magazine.

Like the Sugar-Loaf in Rio, Ibituruna, the dramatic mountain I was flying around, is the granitic core of an ancient volcano. Mineral lodes and gemstones form with the heat of volcanoes – so this was aquamarine country! As a child I was always fascinated by the extraordinary variety, the dazzling hues and the weird chemistry of the gem-stones on display in the old Geological Museum in South Kensington. Stones like the beryl family, where traces of chromium or vanadium turn aluminium silicate into an emerald or a trace of iron turns it into aquamarine – the 'sea-water' stone. I had always wanted to buy my wife Janet an aquamarine from Brazil, and had once even got her as far as looking at H. Stern's display at the airport in Rio de Janeiro. Our flight was leaving, the jewellery was very expensive, and she was undecided, so the moment passed. Then I retired from BBC television and started going to jewellery-making classes once a week. I also took up paragliding.

Governador Valadares is a small town in Minas Gerais, Brazil, founded five years after I was born. It is famous in Brazil for two reasons - as the hottest place in the country, and for the fact that most of the men of working age have left for Massachusetts to work in restaurants or the construction industry. It is said that the town is flush with dollars and that there are six women for every man who remains. That just could be one of the reasons that hundreds of hang-glider and paraglider pilots migrate there, in our northern winter, to fly from the 3,000-foot mountain that towers above the town. To free-flyers "GV" is, of course, world-famous, and has a wonderful party atmosphere at night, but it is also the centre of the Brazilian gemstone industry, with major mines nearby, like the Cruzeiro mine at Safira, the largest in Brazil.

I was teased by the idea of that aquamarine as I circled up to cloud-base in formation with the turkey-vultures over the green and ochre-red landscape laid out below. Aquamarines, I knew, are expensive, but the next New Year also marked our 40th wedding anniversary – appropriate for a little excess expense! I had been to GV three times to launch off that old volcanic core into the sky, but it was only when rain set in last year that I



Just four of the many available women of Governador Valadares

Photo: Mike Andrews

thought more about what was under ground and I tried to reach the mines. My attempt to visit Safira ended after 3 hours driving 80 kilometres with a borrowed Volkswagen stuck in an impassably muddy road. But I did visit a small



Gemstone miners are surprised to dig up a fine example of German engineering, and an old fossil.

Photo: Mike Andrews

local mine producing rose quartz and tourmaline in incredibly primitive conditions, not helped by using home-made dynamite.

I was very concerned about being sold a dud stone or being over-charged, because valuing a stone is an art not a science. The deeper the colour of an aquamarine, the higher the price, but colour is not the only factor: clarity, transparency, inclusions, faults, shape and cutting all contribute. There are no absolutes, no rules by which to judge quality. I also knew that there is more room for fraud in gemstone dealing than in almost any other trade in the world. Still, I was there to paraglide, and that's a risky game too – so, as the river rose in flood, I dodged the downpours to a recommended dealer.

Behind steel shutters on the Avenida there was a stone-cutting workshop above an office lined with safes. The owner, Jose Oliveira, was clearly a big player in this game in which I was a complete novice. But lady luck was with me, there was an American buying stones as I entered. He whispered reassurance to me that I would pay twice as much in New York for the same stones. At first I bought some dendrite quartz, cheap but fascinating – rock-crystal clear as glass with brown-gold inclusions like moths wings trapped inside. I chose these for their shape and figuring, from several trays laid out on the desk. They were priced by weight. This gave me confidence. Then, trying to appear casual, I asked to see aquamarines. Sr. Oliveira pulled out a drawer glittering with dozens of stones of all shapes and sizes and cuts. They were breathtakingly beautiful, deep drops of the south seas scattered on the white cotton backing. I quietly asked the price, and he quoted US \$85.00 a carat (1/5 gram). I picked out a cushion-shaped oblong stone with curved sides, of a darker blue/green, deep, and many-faceted on the back - which enhanced its brilliance. It was weighed in front of me at 7 carats - \$595.00. I offered \$550.00 (£325) because, I argued truthfully, that

was all the money I had. The last of my travellers cheques crossed the counter. Buttoning my aquamarine in my pocket, snug on its bed of cotton wool in its folded slip of white paper, I felt more exhilarated than when I launched off the Ibituruna cliff. What a surprise it would be for Janet!

Our wedding rings had been made from gold which I had acquired in Brazil in 1965, flying in a spluttering single-engined plane to a truly frightening dirt airstrip cut in the jungle. It was near the river Cripori, a sub-tributary of the great southern Amazon tributary, the Tapajos, in the State of Amazonas. In this wild-west-like settlement or 'garimpo' made of split wood shacks. I had traded Polaroid photos of the miners for gold-dust. 500 miners and merchants, with revolvers on their hips, were accommodated by 30 girls in the 'boite' where beer cost a pound a bottle – a fortune in 1965. Then Cripori was accessible only by light aircraft, or by 6 weeks by canoe and two days on foot. Now it is about 50 km from the Trans-amazonian Highway. I was there, shooting a photo-essay, so I could afford to buy a little gold, and even panned some more myself. When I finally got it smelted and assayed by Johnson Matthey & Co in Hatton Garden it was 83.5 percent pure - about 20 carat, a typical South American greenish gold, probably alloyed with silver. Forty years on, I still had some off-cuts and a lump of that gold in a tobacco tin, and now I could use some to make a ring for my aquamarine.

Cont. on p8...



A close-up of Mike's ring. It is on display at the Institute of Contemporary Jewellers' exhibition of rings in the crypt of St George's Church, Brandon Hill, Bristol till September.

Photo: Mike Andrews

Thermal Monster provides Monster Thermal!

Nick Somerville makes full use of the bar and has a stiff drink.

I am writing this article as a sobering reminder to all newbie pilots wishing to dash off to the high mountains of Europe. I definitely don't want to put anyone off because the flying is unbelievable. Just make sure that you believe everything you are told about being wise to the weather. In March 2005 I had just completed my CP training and was keen as mustard to get as much airtime as I could. As usual the combination of the British weather and my chosen profession meant progress was rather slow and I started to pause longer and longer over those few holiday pages that can be found towards the back of Skywings.

After a chat with my mate Roger, a member of the Wessex club, who was a few months ahead of me with his flying we decided that we would give Thermal Monster a try. John Hendy and Marc Basnett run a very tidy chalet in a pretty valley between the ski resorts of Les Arcs and La Plagne. They were advertising a Beginners XC course in the middle of June and the instructor for the week was going to be Gustave Van Vureen. Gustave is normally based in Olu Deniz but has previously had many years flying in the Bourg St Maurice area.



Nick, it's behind you!

was overwhelmed by the feeling that my own rapid ascent was now no longer by virtue of what I thought were my carefully controlled thermal turns. Not only that, but there was a rapid change in the temperature of the air around me.

By now my altimeter was reading 8300', I had stopped my thermal turns and was gale hanging and the vario was still bleeping at an alarming rate. There were some dark clouds brewing rapidly above and behind me and in the distance towards Tigne it was looking very stormy. Big ears did little to help so I went to full bar and then pulled the biggest ears that I could on my Z-One. This gave me some penetration out from the mountain and I gradually descended into the valley. However it was now clear that I had no chance of getting back down the valley to the landing field as the valley breeze was fairly belting up towards Bourg St Maurice. Gustave had already explained that this was not a place to be landing late in the

The first day was spent doing some big top to bottoms and familiarising ourselves with the layout of the wide valley and the procedures for correct approach to the landing field. Gustave is a fanatical teacher who drills you with the techniques and theory of mountain flying and when it wasn't flyable he had us practising forward launches on the landing field over and over again until we were begging for a beer stop. The weather in the area was stifling - pretty up and down with quite a few afternoon storms popping up in one valley or the other. We spent a fair bit of time travelling between potential flying sites in order to get in the air and by day three it was decided to head down to Annecy where it was supposed to be more promising. After coping well with a few launches from the Forclaz take off above lake Annecy and pulling some big asymmetrics that Gustave had suggested were worth trying I was beginning to feel a bit more confident in my flying.

Back at Les Arcs the next day we launched from the top of a ski run at around 3.30pm. There were a few puffy cumulus clouds and Gustave's flight plan was to fly out to the spur and pick up the lift that should be dripping off above the bare rock angled to the sun. This worked a treat and I was soon 1000' higher than take off. After losing the thermal I drifted a little way up the valley towards Les Arcs 1800 where there were acres of concrete buildings that were cooking in the July sun. Bingo, my vario really started to sing and I was feeling pretty happy as I scorched up in the lift. At this point Roger came over the radio in a rather excited tone. "Where the hell are you Nick? It's bloody well raining where I am and the wind is picking up so I think I'll just big ear my way down to the landing field." Just as I looked back down the valley to see Roger descending below a small rain cloud I

day and had described it as a veritable washing machine. I didn't want to be the next service wash and so I started jabbering at Gustave over the radio for advice. "Not a lot I can do for you down here my man, but I suggest you get down on the deck PDQ". After 20 minutes in my descent mode I was at about 800' above the last few fields before town. The trees dotted below were flailing in the strong wind and it was now raining quite hard. I just wanted to be on the ground, I let off the bar, popped out the ears and made a quick turn downwind in order to turn back into wind not far behind some spread out trees. Miraculously I made the landing unharmed and after stuffing the wing away I surveyed my position. I was just 150 yards from the edge of town in the very last patch of open green.

"You alright old boy or have you gone shopping?" Gustave's voice over the radio jolted me back to reality and after telling him where to pick me up from I sought refuge in a café and ordered a stiff drink. By the time he arrived 15 minutes later the sun was shining and the wind had died back to a gentle breeze. It was like nothing had happened. Big lesson learnt then about the power of valley breezes and the potential for rapidly changing weather in alpine regions. I took the next day off flying in favour of land-based activities but through Gustave's encouragement was back in the air for the last day to enjoy some great flying.

Welcome to the Jungle

Chris Jones makes a plea for sanity in scratchy conditions. He gets this issue's Tufty award of an ice cream from the van in the Westbury car park. But be careful crossing the road to launch Chris!

I'm sure many pilots had some nice flying over the May bank holiday weekend, but at Westbury sometimes the flying was a zoo with 15+ paragliders playing scary dodgems. One pilot got hurt flying a bit too close to the scenery. Whether this was due to the crowds is not for me to say, but what I will say is that this is not the way to enjoy the sport of paragliding. Attitudes need to change.

Everybody there came to fly, but did once "phew that was close!" This is not appalling airmanship. If everybody thought others the flying would have been safer, able to make better use of what lift was

The lift was cyclic with long periods of no seemed to want to take off together. They then lift died off. Some managed to find the lift early short while. This kind of behaviour is not unique but it holiday. "So what?" some might be thinking. But is this really the way people want to fly? I don't want to be saying "I told you so" when we have our first serious collisions.



anybody come away without thinking at least meant to be a whinge but I saw some a little more and had more consideration for more fun and people might even have been available.

wind/lift, so when it did arrive everybody flew about getting in each others way until the and get higher than the masses but only for a was starkly highlighted at Westbury over the May bank

What I am proposing? A site marshal telling people when to fly? Nope, what I'm proposing is that pilots take collective responsibility and act in a safer, saner manner. It might take some organising but the rewards will be worth having.

- **Talk to each other.** Find out who the low airtimers are and give them some time in uncrowded air. If you ARE a low airtimer tell the other pilots this and ask them to give you space, don't rely on your red ribbon - it might be other red ribbon pilots you NEED to tell!
- **Don't take off when pilots are below landing height.** Give them time to get back up. At Westbury side landings are not part of the site rules. Don't make things harder for other pilots just so you can get some scratchy flying in.
- **Don't be an air-hog.** Everybody wants to find that thermal, but if it is just scratching up and down, land and let somebody else have a go. Sure you might lose 30 minutes airtime over the weekend, but if everybody behaved this way what airtime you did get would be of higher quality and you might actually be able to core that lift you found!
- **Give people time.** Watch and learn how the day is panning out. Let the first pilots off have some time and space to find lift. Don't rush off to follow them until they are clear. If you lack the skill to know when to take-off on scratchy days you will be able to learn a lot from observing others. Launching madly behind others pilots will tell you nothing. If you think there might be lift, be the first off and learn from your successes or failures.
- **Land often.** Don't leave it until the lift has faded to land. If people are obviously not going up, land before the lift drops off. It might give somebody else the chance to fly and it will give you a less stressful landing. This is especially important for low airtime pilots, don't land only when you are forced to land by the changing conditions. Think of

landing as a skill to be honed, not just an unwelcome outcome of dying lift. Good pilots always choose when and where to land.

- **Fly when it is going up!** Sounds obvious but plenty of pilots seem to launch at the end of cycles when others are coming down and the ridge is getting crowded. If you are not sure about what is happening ask for advice from pilots who seem to know what they are doing. If it was too windy during the lift cycle, but now it is fine for you to launch, plan on catching the next cycle early before the wind picks up.
- **Keep a lookout before you launch.** Obvious, but over the weekend there were some daft incidents of pilots launching into the path of soaring pilots and launching in front of other pilots with their canopies up ready to take-off. On the north face of Westbury it is best to launch away from the edge and higher up the slope. You can see what is going on better and you'll have an extra bit of height when you launch.
- **Keep a lookout in the air.** Another obvious one, but how many times have you seen the "frightened rabbit" pilot appearing to stare straight ahead? Your head should be swivelling about all the time. Not only does this help you keep an eye on what others are doing but also it lets them know that YOU are AWARE of what is going on. This helps to increase everyone's comfort factor. If you feel that someone has not noticed you, don't be shy about calling out to get them to look your way.

These ideas don't just apply to flying at Westbury. If we all had a more "club" focused attitude we'd fly better together. Think of the other guy/gal and give a little for the team. This applies to experts as well as novices. Experts may well be able to find that elusive lift, but sometimes it might be better to encourage others to have a go and provide some tips on when to/not to launch.

Of course every day is different, and on some sites pilots may be desperate to go XC, but with a little thought and consideration we can all get what we really want from our flying.

Many-faceted Flying

...cont. from p5.

I studied as many ring designs as I could find in the college library and finally sketched my own design - of a clustered band of identical round wire rings, some of whose ends would be extended to form the claws to hold the stone. A satisfying fusion of design and function, simple and elegant. To make it I re-melted the gold in a groove cut in a piece of charcoal and then drew it into a wire. A gemstone dealer who was visiting the college kindly checked my aquamarine and, to my great relief, said it was a good one. She particularly liked its depth and form. She said that it was worth £70/carat wholesale, so including VAT it would cost £575. Retail it would cost 2.4 times as much - so £1380 - as much as a new canopy (!) - and that was without the gold and the workmanship for the ring. But I still had to make the ring and setting.

The finished ring did look beautiful and attracted many compliments. My bride of 40 years was delighted and a little dazed. On seeing it at our celebratory party, other husbands looked uneasy. Then somebody said, "Oh, 40 years, isn't that a ruby anniversary?" But most rubies come from the far-east and my mind slips back to that huge wonderful country Brazil and the jungle heat and the music, the beautiful girls and biting insects, and a weather-beaten miner I met in 1965. "So you are going up the Arinos River are you?" He squinted at me. "It's a pity you are not a geologist." From a glass phial he carefully tipped half a dozen small irregular pebbles into the palm of his hand. They were transparent, slightly yellowish, and the size of small peas and cherry stones. "I washed out these diamonds up there. Somewhere there's a mighty big lode."

A month ago a friend who knows Minas Gerais well told me there was a cliff 500 metres high, 500 km long "hidden" deep in the interior, "Way beyond the black stump," He said. A friend of his lived just beneath it. Now I like Brazil, it's full of surprises - even unknown escarpments 500km long ... Who knows, perhaps you could fly that ridge and there might be diamonds as well as gold in them there hills ...

© Michael Alford Andrews, 23 April 2006

The Haute Route

In April 2005 Tony Moore, Alan Russell and the editor of a highly regarded free-flight magazine didn't go flying. Tony Moore describes the stonking great climbs that can be experienced without a paraglider.

This is not a flying article, but an adventure experienced by myself and two other Avon pilots that I hope other pilots will find interesting.

My first experience of big mountains was back in 1989 when I was invited on a skiing holiday, something I'd wanted to do ever since childhood. After that I just had to keep going back for more, and each subsequent year I would have one or two weeks on the slopes. It was on one of these holidays that I first saw paragliding, my first thoughts being, "what a cool way to get down from a mountain, I must do that," and in 1996 I learned, and joined the Avon club. Since then I've realised the following...

- A) Paragliders can go up as well as down.
- B) Hang gliding suits me more because it hurts less when you get it wrong.
- C) If you hit the ground hard enough it can have expensive/painful consequences.
- D) Flying is more fun than skiing, hence one week every other year has become the norm.

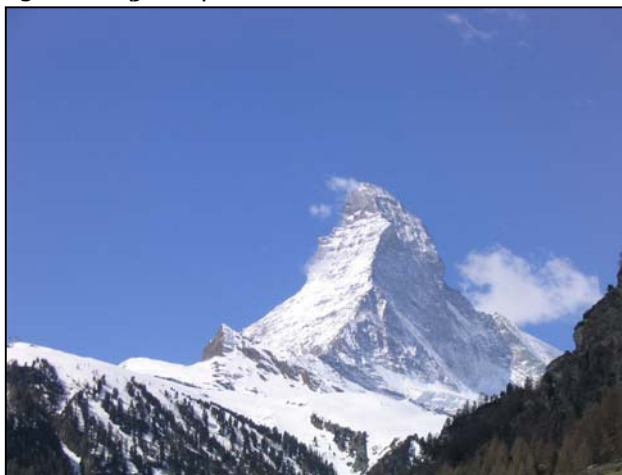
I've also been a keen fell walker for years and somewhere along the line heard about "the Haute Route". This is a high level mountain route between Argentiere (just up the valley from Chamonix) to Zermatt, covering a distance of 50 miles and a total ascent/descent of over 5,000 metres. This can be undertaken in summer on foot, or in spring on skis. I went and bought the definitive guide book, read and drooled at the pics, and after a couple of years put aside the dream of going as none of my mates were interested.

Years later, Sept 2004, I was on the Blorenges on one of those light ESE overcast hopeless days when I was introduced to Alan Russell. We got chatting about stuff and seemed to get on pretty well (I must have been impressed by his Scottish attitude to spending money, something the HG pilots amongst us would empathise with). Eventually we took off and 10 minutes later we carried on the conversation in Castle Meadows. Somehow the Haute Route came up and I learnt that he'd tried to ski it twice (with Richard Danbury and others) and failed, 2005 would be his 50th birthday



**The only way is up
Photo: Tony Moore**

year and he was determined to crack it. I hassled and hassled him, explaining that I was a reasonable skier, had the money and kept fairly fit, even though I'd never done any ski mountaineering. So it was that in April last year myself, Alan and Richard met up in Argentiere. I didn't have a clue what I'd let myself in for.



**The Matterhorn
Photo: Tony Moore**

Ski mountaineering means using special skis and boots that can unlock the heel so that, with synthetic skins (fur-like stuff) stuck to the bottom of the skis, you can slide your way uphill, or maybe I should say upmountain. You need to take other various instruments of torture, such as ice axe, crampons, ski crampons, climbing harness etc, all adding weight to enhance the overall experience.

So there I was, two days before the start of the tour (we'd arranged to join a guided group and given ourselves two days to practise beforehand) trundling

up the chairlift, me thinking that I need to show these guys that I won't be a burden. So, off we get at the top of the chair and a short 20 metre run to the bottom of the next chair and I go arse over tit in front of them. What they must have thought I don't know!

We spent the next two days messing around on the piste, getting used to skiing with 15kg back packs and trying out the uphill skiing. I'd like to thank Alan at this stage for selling me a lot of kit that he'd replaced. What I soon realised is that he'd replaced it with modern stuff that weighed a lot less. His pack was a good 5kg less than mine. Our last evening in Argentiere was spent meeting up with the guides and the rest of our group, three other Brits who'd spent the last week with the guides practising.



Dawn at the Vignettes hut

Photo: Alan Russell

The next morning we all met up at the lift station and enjoyed the only assisted ascent of the whole tour. One of my concerns all along was how I'd be affected by altitude. I was right to be concerned! My only prior (non flying) experience of 3000m had been at the top of ski lifts, and I could remember a kind of breathlessness involved in clambering out of cable cars and to the start of the pistes. The Haute Route is just that, Haute. We'd stay in mountain huts, which ranged in altitude from 2,400m to 3,300m. The trip was planned to take six days and would take us through some stunning scenery.

As we got off the lift at 3200m I first began to question the wisdom of my attendance: 10m visibility and it was snowing. We were leaving civilisation and our bed for the night was a good five miles away, down to the Argentiere glacier and up and over the Col du Chardonay, a sweaty 900m climb that knocked the stuffing out of me. What a relief to get to the top, but there was more to come. After a long traverse we had another col to deal with, this time covered in soft snow and too steep to ski up. It was one of those three steps up two steps back things, sinking to your knees each time. Sweet. Over the top and it was crampons on and an exhilarating abseil down, followed by a long traverse to the hut, which appeared out of the gloom at the last minute. The next day was also tarnished by bad weather, but after that things changed.

The last four days of the tour were an experience that will stay with me for ever. Setting off at 5:00am with head torches we climbed out of Verbier to be greeted with amazing vista after amazing vista. Views of Mont Blanc and Les Grandes Jorasses, followed by easy descents through virgin soft snow in perfect visibility. We were blessed by good weather for the rest of the trip, making each sweaty climb worth every drop. The huts we stayed

in were amazing sanctuaries in the frozen wilderness. How they were built amazes me. Some of the "facilities" were quite interesting. Those of you who've experienced long drop loos at Glastonbury would be impressed by the 200m drop loos at the Vignettes hut. These huts are supplied by helicopter, and the guardians do a pretty good job of looking after you. The dormitories are an experience too. Imagine up to 40 bodies, all completely bushed and snoring their way through the night. The

smell, well there were very limited washing facilities. The last day of the tour was a fitting finale, up at 5:30, setting off at 6:30, we had a short descent and then a 400m climb up to the final col where we looked down a long valley to goal, Zermatt. The Matterhorn was slowly revealing itself as the cloud dispersed and we reluctantly(!) removed the skins from our skis for the last time. The next two hours were awesome. A 10km, 2000m descent, past the mighty Matterhorn, dodging crevasses and monster ice falls in ever increasing sunshine on our journey back to civilisation. Eventually we joined one of the Zermatt pistes and slid down to the finish (myself falling over yet again on some easy snow!)

We'd made it. I'd made it! At times during the tour I never believed this moment would happen, I'd completed it. This trip was without doubt the toughest physical challenge of my life. At times I was digging deeper than ever before to keep going, but the rewards were commensurate with the effort.

I've forgotten exactly how much the trip cost, I would guess at no more than £1200 all in, including getting the odd bit of equipment. You do need to be fit, and a reasonable skier (controlled parallel turns on a good condition black run). How the altitude gets you is the big unknown, it has nothing to do with fitness. And finally you will need a guide. This is the reason why Alan and Richard failed on their previous attempts. When the weather clags in, you can still progress, providing you have someone in your group that knows the way. If you like the photos you can see the whole lot at www.whitehorseaerials.co.uk/gallery.

Huge thanks to Alan and Richard for making it happen.

Competitions and Competition flying

In the last issue of Nova Alex Coltman gave us his top tips for XC flying. Now that we've had a few months of excellent flying weather to put those into practice and to hone our XC skills, it's high time we got serious about competition flying. Here Alex tells us everything we need to know.

Reasons to fly comps

The reasons pilots fly in comps are varied and personal. There are many very good pilots who don't like flying comps for all sorts of reasons, but here I'll outline the reasons why I enjoy flying comps and explain a little about how they work and what I believe they add to my free flying.

How many times have you landed early in the day, the sky still looking amazing and wondered whether you made a mistake or the day changed? Wondered whether if you had pushed east instead of west you could have gone further, and what was that strange cloud? If you made a mistake what was it, could you have gone further if you had flown slower and more cautiously or if you'd flown faster? What was the day worth?



Action at launch

Photo: Tim Pentreath

comps are about. I'm only going to deal with the British Comps, if you fancy entering any of the international comps you should probably know all this stuff already!

First the British Club Challenge (BCC). Avon normally does rather well in this as we have such a dedicated XC membership and the comp is also now run by a couple of our members, Martin and Amy Stanton (not that this affects the results of course!). This is basically an inter-club team event. Each interested club pays an entry fee and fields a team. The comps are organised by the competing clubs so are pretty flexible. It's a great way to start comp flying as the team will usually boast some old hands trying to get everyone as far as possible, and it's very friendly. It's XC fly guiding for free! There are lots of articles about this comp on the Avon websites so I will leave further details of the Avon teams' exploits and how the flying is organised to them.

The next step is the British Paragliding Cup (BPC). This is an individual competition usually consisting of six rounds dotted all over the UK. Dedication and travel are required to do well overall so it's a good idea if you can hook up with another local pilot for this series; it makes all the travel, the retrieves and the inevitable bad-weather drinking more bearable. You will require a GPS for this competition, and it's a good idea to get to know how to drive it too. Advice on which model to choose

Flying comps will help you answer these questions. In most British comps there will be some very good XC pilots and they will often show you what the day was worth. Most will also be more than happy to tell you what they saw in the day, how they flew the day and what they achieved. It may cost you a beer but they've probably spent thousands of pounds and hundreds of hours learning and working out this stuff so it's a bargain, and you will be amazed at what some of the UK's better pilots can see in a given day. I have yet to meet any UK comp pilot who wouldn't happily answer questions.

Hierarchy of comps

British Paragliding comps are a pretty confusing bunch of acronyms. You might start doing the BCC then move onto the BPC then what used to be the BPC but is now the Open Championship and onwards maybe to the PWC and the Worlds. Here I'm going to look at what some of these

differs but speak to current comp pilots or the comp organisers and they will be more than happy to help. Many experienced UK pilots choose to do the BPC year on year as it's a great fun comp and the next step is more expensive, more demanding and taken somewhat more seriously.

The top British comp used to be called the league, then became the British Paragliding Championship (BPC again!!) and is now the British Open Championship. It entails flying three rounds, one UK-based and the other two abroad, usually a mix of mountains and flatland flying. The tasks are longer and more demanding, the gaggles are often large and the sites are often some of the most thermic places in Europe. Entry to the championship is controlled by the BHPA competitions panel, and they have a set of criteria they like to see reached before accepting your entry. From this comp a British Champion is chosen and it's the major stepping-stone onto the British Squad for international competitions.

Equipment to fly comps

Obviously the most important piece of gear is your glider. For the British-based comps you could do very well on a DHV1/2 or standard rated glider. Honestly you could! The tasks, although they are called races, are usually XC flights and usually downwind. Most decent DHV1/2s will climb as well as anything (often better than DHV2/3s or above) and at trim speed will glide well too. Not until the British Open Championship does glide at speed start to become more important, and to do well overall in these comps you probably need a good DHV2 or DHV2/3 minimum. There will be long glides using bar, often into wind or in sink, and the extra glide at speed of the higher rated wings really does pay. It goes without saying that you should enjoy flying your glider and be reasonably happy with its safety. No one will laugh at you if you rock up with a DHV1/2 glider but after one long into-wind glide you will see why there are such things as DHV2/3 and comp wings!

Once beyond the BCC you will need a GPS (and there are rumours that you may need one for the BCC this year). A GPS basically works out where you are, using satellites and triangulation, records this information along with a time (tracklog points), and can also be used to navigate towards given points (waypoints). At registration your GPS will have waypoints loaded onto it by the organisers. These are points they will use as starts, turnpoints and goals. The GPS tracklog is used to show where you have been and at what time, so the organiser can verify whether you flew the task, how far along it you got, and how fast you flew. The tracklog is stored as a series of points and the major difference between GPS models for comp flying is the number of these tracklog points they can store. Using two GPS units I have experience of as examples: a basic Garmin 12 has 1024 points, whereas a Garmin 76S has 10,000.

There is enough to write about GPS's and their use alone to fill an article. If there is enough demand I'm sure one can be arranged.

All comps insist on a reserve being carried, and if you are carrying one it makes sense to make it one that will work. Again ask around, there are lots of models out there and lots of advice. If you like to make up your own mind, Metamorfoosi (a reserve manufacturer) has a good website with lots of (only slightly biased) useful info. Oh, and probably the most important thing is to get it repacked regularly so it'll open quickly if you have to use it.

All the rest of the stuff you probably already have. A radio, mobile phone, a harness you feel comfortable in with back protection, helmet etc. A detailed map of the area is always handy and will guarantee you some friends on take off when everyone wants to know the terrain on the way to goal.

Unfortunately, as with most things in life, you will also require paperwork. For all the comps you'll require at least pilot rating (as hopefully you are going to flying XC!) and for entry into the British Open Championship Advanced Pilot is asked for. You will need a FIA sporting licence from the BHPA along with your BHPA membership card. It's also mandatory to have travel, search and rescue, and repatriation insurance for the foreign rounds of the Open Championship for obvious reasons.



Avon's Tim Pentreath making himself nice and slippery for those long glides at Mayrhofen

Photo: Alex Coltman

How a comp is run

Entry to comps is usually via the internet. Some links are available on Tim Pentreath's excellent Avon XC league page (www.avonpgxc.co.uk) and there are a few addresses at the end of this article. Once you are accepted and have handed over your entry fee, details of the registration date and time will be published. At the registration your documents will be checked, paperwork signed, your GPS will have the waypoints uploaded and many pints will be consumed as old friendships are rekindled. This can seem a bit cliquy to the newcomer but get a beer and join in. All the pilots have been where you are now at some time and none will take exception to a keen newcomer asking questions especially if also offering a round!!

Also at the registration, a time will be published for the daily morning briefing. This takes place at the comp base and consists of lots of useful info, meteo summary and a site is chosen for the day. A time will also be given for the on-site briefing.

The on-site briefing will give you the comp task, all relevant details such as safety frequencies, check-in details and times for the task.



There are several types of task but the two usually used are a race to goal and an elapsed-time race to goal. The straightforward race to goal consists of a start time, and then the first pilot into goal wins the day, nice and simple. The elapsed time race means that your start time is taken from your GPS tracklog, i.e. your race starts when your tracklog crosses the start line. This complicates matters as often the first person into goal will not win the day, as later pilots may be able to use earlier gaggles to fly faster and hence achieve a shorter elapsed time. This adds a complexity to the task, as the top pilots will be trying to decide whether to go early or wait for a possible improvement in weather or more thermal markers. I reckon the best tactic for us non-skygods is as long as people are not bombing out straight away it's probably best to get in the air and get going as soon as possible. This way we get to fly with, and hopefully learn from, the hot shots for a couple of thermals until they leave us behind.

Most tasks will consist of a start gate, maybe some turnpoints and a goal. The start gate can be an internal or external cylinder of any radius around the take off or another turnpoint. This sounds a bit confusing and there have been mistakes, but take a while to work out what is required and you'll be fine. The turnpoints are generally cylindrical with a 400 metre radius meaning you must fly to within 400 metres of the co-ordinates and then wait for your GPS to log a tracklog point.

An on-site briefing

Photo: Tim Pentreath

Now think about a turnpoint at the end of a long into-wind glide in a rough and sinky valley, and you'll see what I meant about the importance of a short GPS tracklog record interval. You either have to spend 5 seconds there or 30 seconds there!

Then we're off to the next turnpoint or working out final glide into goal. Goal is often a 400 metre cylinder too, but can be a much larger radius if landing options at goal are unknown. The more competitive pilots will be thinking about how lifty or sinky the glides for the rest of the task have been, will be studying their glide angle on the GPS and working out when to dive for goal. There is a fine line between leaving first and sneaking into goal to win or leaving too early and blowing it. Last year in the Nationals one of Britain's most talented pilots, led out on the final glide only to land 20 metres short after flying nearly 50km. Gutted!

Once you have landed, pack up (a glider left open is a sign to other pilots that you are injured and need assistance) and while thinking about getting back you should check in. This can be either by voice or text message but basically it's your way of telling the meet director that you are safe. It's then your job to get back to HQ and download your GPS as soon as you can so the scoring can be done.

Thinking of doing some comps?

Try and convince a friend to do the same comp or try to buddy up with someone already entered. It helps with travel costs and makes the social side easier, you also have someone you know to gauge yourself against, so you know how you flew compared to your normal performance. As I've already said once, at the comp most pilots will be happy to help you through the first few tasks, you just have to ask.

Stay somewhere close to where the briefing is held. This makes retrieves easier and is usually where the party is!

Know and trust your equipment. It takes away a whole layer of worry if you can program your GPS and work your radio, and you may be able to offer help to someone else.

Buy some beers and ask questions. It's the easiest way to get ideas, tips and info out of a pilot.

Detailed tips for comps

Before you leave for the comp sort out your gear. Everything should be just as you want it, batteries all charged with spares for the rest of the comp. Reserve repacked, GPS learnt, etc. Nothing nagging at the back of your mind that you never got round to sorting.

Get to the comp registration early. There will normally be a few hours slot to register, if you are there early the organisers will appreciate it (always good to keep them happy!) and you'll be free to chat to other pilots, check out the meteo or get down to the pub in preparation. Now I know that perceived wisdom says drinking could slow your reflexes and dehydrate you but you are here to enjoy yourself and a pint or two probably will do more good by relaxing you a little. It's a personal thing; just remember what you hope to be doing tomorrow.

There will be a morning briefing and a site will be called. You already have all your batteries, lunch, water, maps etc. sorted so you don't need to run round like most others will be. Get to the site in good time and get your gear rigged, then bunch your glider. Start looking at what is going on in the sky, there will usually be plenty of waiting around so there's time to chat, but keep an eye on how long the cycles are lasting, cloud life, other gliders, which part of the hill is working best, wind direction and whether it's increasing or dying off. What we are trying to do is get a picture of what is happening to the day what sort of flying we can expect and whether it's getting better or worse.

At the site briefing take notes of all info given and the task, then once it's finished, walk to your gear, sit down and concentrate on programming your GPS. If you make a mistake here you will probably blow the day. If uncertain find someone with the same GPS and ask for help (if you are unsure about your GPS this is best done before the briefing as after briefing everyone is starting to get into their comp modes). Look at the route on your map and try and plan it in your head so, as a minimum, you know where you are going and maybe look at likely ground sources en route.

Using the weather info you gained from earlier you may or may not know whether the day is improving or dying. In any case if it's soarable and you are comfortable with the traffic, get into the air. This will calm your nerves and will mean you are in the best position should people start climbing. If you are nervous or unsure of yourself in gaggles it is fine to wait a bit. There have been many tasks where the late leavers have flown furthest as the day improved, but generally the lead gaggle will win the task. It's where the best pilots are and where most of the decisions are made, and hence the best place to learn. Subsequent gaggles usually follow the leaders' line (unless the lead gaggle all land or get stuck!) but never fly as quickly and often don't make their own decisions even though conditions may have changed since the lead gaggle came through.

WATCH. All the best pilots will spot a glider reacting to turbulence before it starts to climb and will be ready to move towards it. They are constantly on the lookout for anything that signifies better air (read any or all of Mr Pagen's books if you need help with these).

Use the gaggle but also work with it. It is fine to join a climbing gaggle, in fact you'd be mad not to, but be sure to conform to thermal etiquette and allow others some room. Once gliding try and do your fair share of the work. Spread out and look for the next step, use your XC skill to look for the next climb, but remember to keep watching. Look behind you occasionally as well, sometimes the leaders will miss something the stragglers find. Don't reject the option of turning back if it looks better. By working as a team a gaggle can fly very quickly and efficiently, if one pilot is just being followed it slows the whole gaggle and the followers are not learning as much as they would if they made some decisions.

Play it safe with the GPS tracklog. Allow enough time for it definitely to have logged at least one point before leaving the start gate or turnpoint. It might cost you a few seconds but also might save you from missing the waypoint and binning the day. I know of one pilot who watched his GPS on the way to a turnpoint until it said 400 meters then started to 360 in weak lift. He was turning right on the edge of the turnpoint cylinder and unknown to him his GPS tracklog interval coincided with his turn rate meaning all his tracklog points were being placed just outside the turnpoint cylinder. He had a lovely track to

the cylinder, several points round the outside of the cylinder then a track away from the turnpoint. The scoring software said that he had not made the turnpoint and hence he was scored to his closest point and no further. I am not going to name the pilot but you know how a drink loosens tongues!

Final glide can be worked out by many of today's GPS units but only the top-end combined vario/GPS units take into account wind speed and direction. Use them, but it's sometimes wise to leave a margin for the unknown. Once in goal or on the ground somewhere else (hopefully fairly close!) switch off your GPS, pack up and make your way back to base to have your GPS tracklog scrutinised by the organisers. The earlier you can do this the better, comp organisers are mostly unpaid volunteers who want to get something to eat or a few beers just as much as you do. Do them the courtesy of getting your GPS sorted before anything else.

At the GPS download it's the ideal place and time to ask other pilots how their day was. This is one of the best things about flying comps. You will get excited and in depth debriefs from some very good pilots, all while it's fresh in their minds, and it's free! You will be amazed at what a large picture some of the pilots are looking at, while you saw a few cumulous and a bit of wind they may have seen convergence, shadow lines, cloud streets, wave and all kinds of wonderful stuff.

Conclusion (at last!)

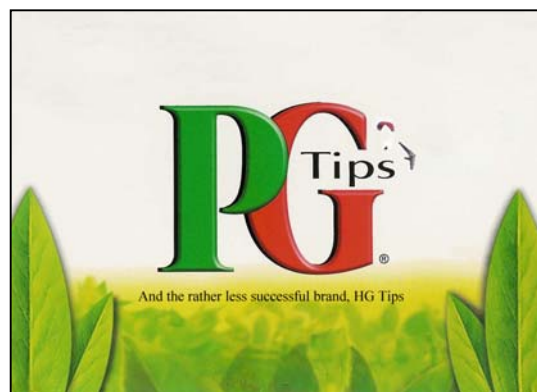
As I said at the start, there are many reasons why an individual will choose to take part in comps or not to. For me it is a good way to improve my flying, it's taken me to areas I probably would never have gone otherwise and pushed my personal flying aims and limits. I still remember my first ever good comp day, it was a BCC (we all know what this is now don't we!) on a nice thermic day from Merthyr. I had done a few small XCs before but usually had trouble finding 2nd and 3rd thermals. Anyway I took off late, waiting until some of the traffic had gone and slowly climbed out only to be greeted by the sight of three perfect thermals all marked by gaggles of gliders on route downwind. That was, for me, when I understood how great comp flying is. A bunch of nice people doing something superb and all trying to achieve the same thing. HOW COOL IS THAT!!

Useful websites:

www.pgcomps.org.uk

www.bpcup.co.uk

www.flybcc.co.uk



PG Tips

We only use the most juicy and succulent tips here at Nova. But consult a club coach, your instructor, or your IT helpline if you're in any doubt that you can apply the advice safely.

- All of you will have heard of eBay and perhaps many of you have already used it. I'm not sure that I would recommend buying a used paraglider on the site unless you had a chance to inspect it first, but so far in the last 18 months I have managed to buy the following items all new and at less than half their RRP. Gradient Compact Harness (£199), Hanwag flying boots (£74) and recently a GPSMAP 76CS (£230). So keep an eye out and grab a bargain! **Nick Somerville**
- I had a very near miss the last time I flew in a scenario that I think could be common to all new CPs. For new CPs like myself, top landing is a difficult procedure that is not yet automatic. Because it takes a lot of concentration it is difficult to be aware of other pilots on the ridge when you are focussed on your spot landing. In my case I was about to land, literally inches off, but hit lift and overshot. I was so focussed on landing that I did not notice the pilot flying along the ridge on collision path until the last moment. It could have been nasty but we were lucky. On this occasion I was in the right and the other pilot should have turned left away from the ridge, however the golden rule is to avoid any possible collisions regardless.
So, the moral to the story is: if you are a new CP, when you are doing tasks that require all your concentration, like a top landing, always be aware of other pilots. **Chris Garrett** (See the ensuing discussion of this at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/avonhgpg/message/552> – Ed.)



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Caption competition

Last issue's photo was of Rich Harding in the landing field at Bir. A deluge of entries came dribbling in, and the best (well all of them) are shown below. But according to a vote by the Committee, accredited as fair and impartial by the Electoral Reform Society, the very utterly best was by Alex Coltman:

"Who designed that glider darling? Don't they know that blue and orange were so last year."

Well done Alex!



Photo: Mike Rossdale

Here is this issue's photo. Again the scene of the action is Bir, but this time Ken Wilkinson is reclining provocatively after a hard day's flying which seems to have been not without mishap. Fortunately comfort is not far away in the form of a solicitous hand.

Send your entries to editor@avonhpgp.co.uk. You know it makes sense - this is your chance to get published in Nova without being endlessly hassled by me for an article.

Photo: Mike Humphries



"I'm a little teapot, short and stout. Here's my handle, here's my spout." – Rich Harding.

Drinking TEA and Smoking POT can ruin your standing in life. – Stafford Evans.

"Hey, my wrist has gone limp - I think I'm having a premonition." – Chris Jones.

"When you said team colours were blue with orange on top, why didn't you tell me you meant GLIDERS ONLY! Now I look a right hamster." – Chris Jones.

"This hat used to belong to Kenneth Williams, and I think it's haunted." – Chris Jones.

"I'm a teapot, I'm a teapot, NOT a Belisha beacon, nurse, nurse!" – Chris Jones.

Diary of Events

- June 8 Club meeting - Nick Berry of Himalayan Kingdoms will be telling us about his adventures on "The Frozen Zanskar River". Zanskar River is in Ladakh, northwest Indian Himalaya.
- July 13 Club meeting - DVD Night. The club has recently bought a lot of new flying DVDs. Here's a chance to preview some of them, whilst relaxing with a cold drink and popcorn.
- July 15 For the petrol heads there's an aerobatics competition at Compton Abbas Airfield.
- August 10 Club meeting – TBC.
- August 26-28 Bloreng Party.
- September 1-3 The Mere Bash. This is the premier event of the 2006 season. Don't miss it! There might be a bouncy castle again!
- September 8-10 Paramania festival – mid Wales.

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Classified(s)

I have for sale my Flying Planet Sprit (L) (90 -106kg) DHV 1-2 (4 years old). Red and White, about 200 hours. Very good condition. No acro or water landings. Replaced two A-lines last year. (Note: Flying Planet have changed their name to Aerodyne.)

This wing was one of the top-performing wings of its time and has a glide of about 8.0. It is very stable and forgiving with just the right amount of feedback to learn what is going on in the air. I bought it after I had flown about 30 hours. It's an ideal wing for any good CP student to get him/her to Pilot rating.

It is a great thermal machine and I have flown XCs over 50km with it.

It's for sale and no reasonable offer is refused. Purchaser may have to wait until my new wing arrives though.

Contact Andre Odinius on 01249 710266 or 01249765953.