

Nova

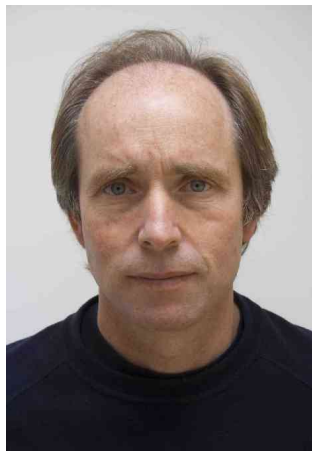
The Magazine of the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

August 2009



Cover Photo: John Cheale in Southern Slovenia (flying from Lijak) February 2009 – some more photos later in this issue (with apologies to Skywings – but you can't beat a large photo!)

Editor's Bit



Firstly an apology for the late arrival of the magazine but I hope you'll find that the wait has been worth it, as we have a jam packed bumper issue this quarter.

It never does any harm to remind yourself of the dangers of our sport, and it was whilst reading the on-line magazine of the South Devon club that I stumbled upon one particularly gripping article about hang gliding on the south coast, and I have (with permission) reproduced this here. To balance things up there is a report of another equally 'interesting' incident, this time on a paraglider and concerning one of our own members.

Also in this issue there is a round up of some of the early BCC competitions, a report on the first round of The British Hang Gliding Open competition, we travel to Austria and Slovenia and also do some local flying. Thanks again for all of the contributions and help – and if you feel inspired by anything you read, or do anything which you would like to share with the rest of the club then get writing and/or snapping!

Enjoy the magazine.

Rob Kingston

Chairman's Chunter – August 2009



I wouldn't normally advise you not to read Nova, but on this occasion that's exactly my advice, at least for the moment. What you need to do first is *get your tickets for the Mere Bash!* When you've done that you can relax with this great issue of Nova, safe in the knowledge that you've secured an entire weekend's entertainment for a mere (sic) £10. As you no doubt already know, it's the weekend of 5-6 September. This year we've again got two brilliant bands for you to dance to, we have the ever-popular bouncy castle, the even-more-ever-popular barbeque, and the you're-my-best-friend-you-are ridiculously cheap beer. And following last year's immensely popular hawk walk, we'll be visiting Mere Down Falconry to see their great collection of eagles, hawks and owls.

As I write this it's rather grey and drizzly, and the Met Office hasn't been very popular with the media over the last couple of days because of their "promise" of a barbecue summer. They've now revised their forecast for the rest of the summer to say "rainfall is likely to be near or above average over the UK". But I've just looked at the Met Office website, and they're working to the official definition of summer, which ends at the end of August. So I'm predicting fantastic autumn weather, starting with the Mere Bash weekend! So just send me a cheque for £10 to Bramble Cottage, Rectory Lane, Compton Martin, BS40 6JP, and I'll send you a fun-voucher probably worth ten times that amount.

In my last chunter I talked about the new launches at Whitesheet Hill (i.e. Mere) that Nick Somerville has been negotiating with the National Trust. He's done a great job, and we've reached the point where there is a draft agreement for me to sign. Unfortunately the agreement would hold the officers of the club liable for any damage or injury that occurs on the NT land, so we are having to take legal advice about that. So please bear with us – we were hoping to have the launches available this summer, but that's looking less likely now. Nick is still plugging away tirelessly at it, so we'll get there as soon as we can.

I hope you've been getting some good flying in spite of the weather. My flying seems to have been mostly confined to ten (rather good) days in France, so I've mostly only been seeing club members at our club meetings (which have been brilliant if you've been foolish enough to miss them). But there's still plenty of the season left, so I hope to see you all on a hill soon.

Richard



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The banner features a central image of a yellow paraglider over a rocky coastline. Above this is a row of eight small square images showing various paragliding activities. At the top left is a white line-art logo of a person with arms outstretched. The text 'Windtech UK' is written in a large, stylized, white font with a blue outline across the middle of the banner.

Club News



The following statement was recently circulated to neighbouring clubs to clarify the situation with respect to access to Avon club sites.

The Avon Club committee would like to remind pilots that visiting pilots are welcome on our sites, but they must be fully conversant with the site rules and must have up-to-date membership of the BHPA (or international equivalent). In the case of Draycott, pilots must be members of the Avon club. The site rules are available on the club website at <http://www.avonhgpg.co.uk/sites/members.php?menu=5>, and visiting pilots are asked to consult the sites officer or a committee member prior to flying, either on the hill or via the contact details at <http://www.avonhgpg.co.uk/contacts.php?menu=3>.

Stop Press

Avon finished runners-up in the Paragliding BCC competition held at The Long Mynd over the weekend of 8th/9th August, although the competition was overshadowed by a tragic accident on the Saturday afternoon. Full details of the competition will appear in the next issue of Nova.



Pete Waters (eventually) receives his award for 'most improved pilot' 2008 from club chairman Richard Danbury and Bruce Goldsmith.

- Congratulations to Paddy Russell and Rob Kingston for gaining their Paragliding Pilot ratings.

Training



Stop talking about it and get some flying done! Why not get your own personal coach, rather than having to talk to complete strangers on the hillside?



Have you seen this man?

Well you should have (although he is currently in France – but you can still contact him by email) as Martin Nichols is heading up the club paragliding coaching programme. If you are a low air-timer, or anyone in need of some coaching, then he will be sorting you out with a personal coach. The club has many coaches and so there should be more than enough to go around.

You might even want Martin (or your coach) to explain it all to you over a beer; his is apparently a pint (or two) of Butcombe.

Martin has also organised various coaching days/evenings and an air map evening over the last few months (thanks to Tim as well), which have worked very well.

BCC Paragliding Competitions

Ken Wilkinson has been busy organising many rounds of the BCC, and Avon 'A' and 'B' teams have been well represented in both these and other rounds, and results have been such that Avon 'A' is currently in top spot. The final in August beckons! (Ed – as you will know by now Avon finished runners-up)

Below are some shots (mainly taken by Martin Nichols) from various rounds.



Martin Nichols
BCC Blorengre (NW face) 22/3/09 – Ken Wilkinson gets ready to launch



Martin Nichols
BCC Bell Hill 24/3/09



Martin Nichols
BCC Bell Hill 24/3/09



Assorted pilots 'chilling' on the Tal y bont plateau (photo: Richard Danbury)



Martin Nichols

BCC Easter 11/04 Base at Tal y bont



Martin Nichols

BCC Bloreng (NE bowl) 19/4/2009 Graham Richards heads out

WHITE HORSE MARQUEES (Sponsors of the Mere Bash)

Why not try flying something different in 2009 like Bertie's new open-cockpit microlight (below left)?

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Or how about flying on water with a Sky Ski Hydrofoil (below right)?
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News from the Social Secretary



Ali Lees the club social secretary has again been working exceptionally hard to arrange some of the best lectures around.

She has also fixed the dates and details of the famous Mere Bash and details are below. Don't miss it!

The Mere Bash 5th/6th September 2009

The legendary Mere Bash marks the end of the summer flying season with the party to end all parties in the bottom landing field at Mere.

There will be all the usual fun with a band, bonfire, beer, BBQ, bouncy castle, face painting, camping and obviously if the weather gods play ball, we'll be flying and they'll be tandem flights available.

This year, after last year's fantastic "Hawk Walk", we also are going to visit the nearby Mere Down Falconry - <http://meredownfalconry.co.uk/> on the Saturday afternoon prior to the frivolities kicking off.

All Welcome - flyers, partners, families, friends, non-flyers, etc.

Tickets - £10 in advance £15 on the day (children free).

For advanced ticket drop me an email or see me or any other committee members at the club meetings.

Ali

The last few months have seen some incredible speakers. In April we hosted the legendary Bruce Goldsmith - world champion pilot and Airwave designer, then in May the brilliant Jim Mallinson & Eddie Colfox talked about their Himalayan adventures, and in June Angus & Fiona Macaskill talked about their epic month long micro-lighting 'backpacking' trip around New Zealand.



Bruce Goldsmith - paraglider designer and top pilot



Jim Mallinson and Eddie Colfox who talked about their adventures in the Himalayas



Angus and Fiona Macaskill - who flew around New Zealand

Early June XC's from Coombe Gibbet Nev Almond

Early June started good, with high pressure and very light northerlies. Tuesday 2nd saw just four of us (two Rigids and two paragliders) on Coombe Gibbet, with a 4 Mph north-easterly – not enough to ridge soar, but RASP assured us that the thermals would be there. Stuart Prosser and I were reluctant to launch until we had a positive sign of lift, but the two PG's had a few hops, getting 100ft or so every now and then. Richard Bungay was maintaining in weak lift to the west, while to the east I noticed a Red Kite starting to turn & climb, a long way out from the hill, but going up well. The wind on hill dropped to zero, and with all indicators in place I stampeded across the hill (48kg of glider, groan) and flew straight out – at 100 yards out the first few blips appeared: being low you have to stay in anything until you have a good core. After two turns Richard joined me on his PG, and we managed to gain about 500ft before it became washy, so I headed ½ mile west (underneath where a small cu had developed in an otherwise blue sky). I then hit the real lift, going all the way to 4000ft, where Richard eventually joined me. Today was full of indecision: I first headed SE, but failed to connect with good thermals and had to resort to using ground sources (a euphemism for nearly landing). Not wanting to land so soon, I turned SW, towards the few Cu's near Andover, and then met up again with Richard Bungay near Thruxton. Richard circumnavigated Thruxton and Middle Wallop well, and flew on into Dorset for around 65 miles. I turned back north, flew back to Coombe, and further still to junction 13 of the M4 before gliding back to Coombe for a 40 mile O/R and 5pm landing.

Thursday 4th June (2 days later) saw us back on Coombe with a similar direction and strength, but this time better thermals & Cu's forecast. Today was lacking in Raptors to help pinpoint good lift, but compensated by many more PG's to help out. A few guys on PG's got away early (11:30), after which the wind died to typically less than 4mph. By 1:30 it was painful, looking like it would be one of those days you get stranded on the hill in epic conditions, so I joined some PG's maintaining in light lift at 100ft – 30 seconds after take off I regretted getting airborne, but luckily saw a crow going up in the NE bowl – when B52-like crows are climbing the air must be good, and on arrival I found a few rough blips which gained me 50ft now and then but nothing solid, and was joined by Richard Bungay again and one other. At 300ft, looking up and behind, the pulling Cu seemed to be behind the hill, and thinking the thermal/cloud had almost passed I took a chance flying behind the Coombe spine (eek – although it was only 4Mph), and connected with a 4,5 then 6 up, in sync with the PG's I was flying with landing on the ridge. The lift took me to base at 4500ft, and the Cu's were now a perfect lattice in every direction, so the next 3 hours was spent performing textbook XC flying (glide-climb-glide-climb) with each Cu perfectly spaced at around 3-4 miles. Base rose to 5500ft, and I topped out at 6000ft a few times with some nice smooth cloud climbs. The route took me from Coombe, down to Westbury, back to Coombe, then East to Whitchurch, landing back at Coombe at 5pm for a 72 mile out and return. (waypoints 64-67-64-68-64 on the attached map).



The first round of the British HG Open Series – May 2009

Neil Atkinson



The Author at Westbury - photo Sarah Ward

Day 1 Merthyr SW T/O

A lot of familiar faces, worryingly few new one's and nearly all had some grey in the hair. Sign of a dying sport methinks.

Task is a 60km race to anywhere and as expected the site is Merthyr. Inevitably it's overcast and the forecast is for rain. As always at Merthyr when south of west it's howling as the out of phase wave is occasionally causing compression on the hill and making it very strong and rough on a fairly regular basis.

I'm not in the first wave off and when I do the new vario is maybe not the best of ideas for this flight, as it takes quite a while to work how to turn the volume up enough so I can hear it. I get one climb to 2650' but opt to return to the ridge in hope of a better one. Not much chance as the sky is rapidly getting worse.

I get another climb which I take finally topping out around 2950' I glide to the Tredegar range but haven't found anything else and chicken out of the death glide over the next valley and instead opt to take an easy landing at the north end of the Tredegar ridge. Having landed someone else comes over and decides to take the glide so probably made a mistake there...at least I have minimum distance points for flying.

Best on the day is Grant but when I'm asked to use SeeYou to check for airspace infringement he's gone right through the middle of one of the base danger areas. Tony Stephens and Dave Matthews are therefore in 1st and 2nd with around 42K.

Day 2 Merthyr

Forecast is much better and the task is crosswind to Hay Bluff Trig point and then back to Raglan.

Gaggles are starting to climb out and I decide to fly only to end up in the bottom landing within 10 minutes with 4 other pilots who took off at the same time, by the time we've all landed it's become ridge soarable and everyone is in the air. Not looking to be a good day.

Eventually get back up the hill and ready to fly at 4.10PM so decide to take off and get some airtime with the new vario. However by 4.25 I'm climbing out with Steve Gale in a beautiful core with a good cloud lined up in the direction of TP1.

Steve (who' wasn't in the comp) later asked why I left the lift as there was more altitude left in that first core. However with the lift weakening and a good line of cloud to follow in the right direction I had no inclination to hesitate. Two climbs and I'm over the A40 and decide to take a glide towards the hills over Crickhowell from where you can ridge run to Hay bluff.

Fortunately there is a climb right over the shear cliffs that drop down into the Crickhowell valley so another 1500' sees me making the bowl overlooking Crick. The problem is that this is one bowl further downwind than I want to be. What I needs he thinks is a bullet of a thermal to get me out of here. Wham! The vario screams and the glide rockets up and then down. Boy that thing is tight. Couple 360's and it's obvious this one has got away from me.

Ok maybe not so strong on the next core please. Wham! Ok I want waste time going downwind I just trying climbing into wind and then head round the corner of the upwind hill. I lose 700' but a couple of hundred feet short of the corner and while still above the steeper lower slope I start to climb and can hence slow up and let the flaps off.

Cruising up the ridge with flaps off is a dawdle. The glide out over the final spur before Millgarth initially looks to be an issue but there is a fair bit off lift around so slowing up and climbing into wind out into the valley soon makes it obvious that it's doable.

The Bluff is not working, but I've got the turn point and start heading back. I get part way down Lord Herefords Knob. Fnarr fnarr everyone's been down on Lord Hereford's Knob - well if you tried the Crick run from the bluff in a single surface glider you would have anyway.

Before take off I had discussed dropping over the back and running down the west side of the Pandy ridge, now that I'm here and thinking I'd blown the land by time I decide to head back to the Crick valley with the idea of landing back at the campsite. Taking the Pandy ridge was direct to goal so I should have copied Tony Stephens who had dropped over the back with a couple of hundred feet a while earlier in the day.

The ridge run back is easy with a couple of good thermals one of which I should have gone downwind with as it was taking me straight to goal, but at this stage my mind had fixated on landing back at the campsite.

However looking down at the valley from 2.5K and I couldn't resist following the south facing ridges towards Abergavenny. Doesn't work but I do get just enough lift to land at Castle Meadows (Bloreng bottom landing field). Landing at 6.40 I just beat the land/phone by time of 7PM and get 5th on the day for a gloriously fun flight.

The highlight was Dave Tyrer phoning from Merthyr to ask Tony Moore if he had any idea where I was. Apparently Tony who had driven away just as I took off replied that he could see me crossing the valley right over his head!

Grant won the day with Tony Stephen and Dave Mathews close behind.



Day 3 Tredegar

Task Tredegar - Chepstow (M48 roundabout) - Sherston

I GOT TO GOAL....

The day starts overcast and there is suggestion in the forecast of rain to come. The first main gaggle leaves just as blue sky appears on the horizon. I choose to wait along with Tony Stephens and Graham Phipps and of course the rest of the field who haven't got away or flown yet.

Unfortunately the air is crappy despite the blue sky and I fail to get even a half way decent climb until close to 4.30PM. No speed points for me as the last start time is 3PM, not much of a concern

as I certainly didn't have any great expectation of getting to goal; after all I'd never even crossed the Severn before. I'd been to the coast between the two bridges but chickened out of the crossing when flying from Tredegar in a BCC previously.

The climb I do leave in is over 8 up on the averager with 12 up peaks to 5k+, it's amazing climbing and watching people who later said they had a 6 up dropping rapidly away below you. There is one other pilot with me (Merak in the sports class I learn later) slightly higher in the thermal.

He heads of downwind to the next cloud as he's somewhat above me. However as soon as I spot him I decide it's time to leave but choose a more easterly course as this is closer to track whilst still having good clouds en-route.

I hesitate under the first cloud but realise the lift is weak and keep going until just past the last hill where there is another 8 up climb to 4800. Old habits kick in south of the lake beyond Pontypool and I take a mere 5 up for a lowly 800 feet top up.

Clouds are looking very distant at this point there is a good semi permanent one at the coast mid way between the two bridges. The cloud street to my NE and heading straight towards the bridge is probably where I should have gone but going 90 degree crosswind in the lee of the Welsh hills doesn't strike me as a good idea so I head for the good cloud on the coast.

Some lift over the hills before the coast gains me back 700' but the lift is weak and drifting to the coast where the cloud has disappeared. I decide to head for the turn point, losing 900 feet this is the lowest point of the flight since leaving the hill.

You know that everyone tells you to head for the trigger points. Believe me it works, I get halfway to the turn point smack over a golf course complete with a tree surrounded lake and straight in to a 7 up. When I reach the coast I turn inland and head for the turn-point flying back up the cloud street that has now formed in lift until the Brauniger gives that distinctive turn point warble... What a great sound to hear whilst in lift with more cloud downwind of you.

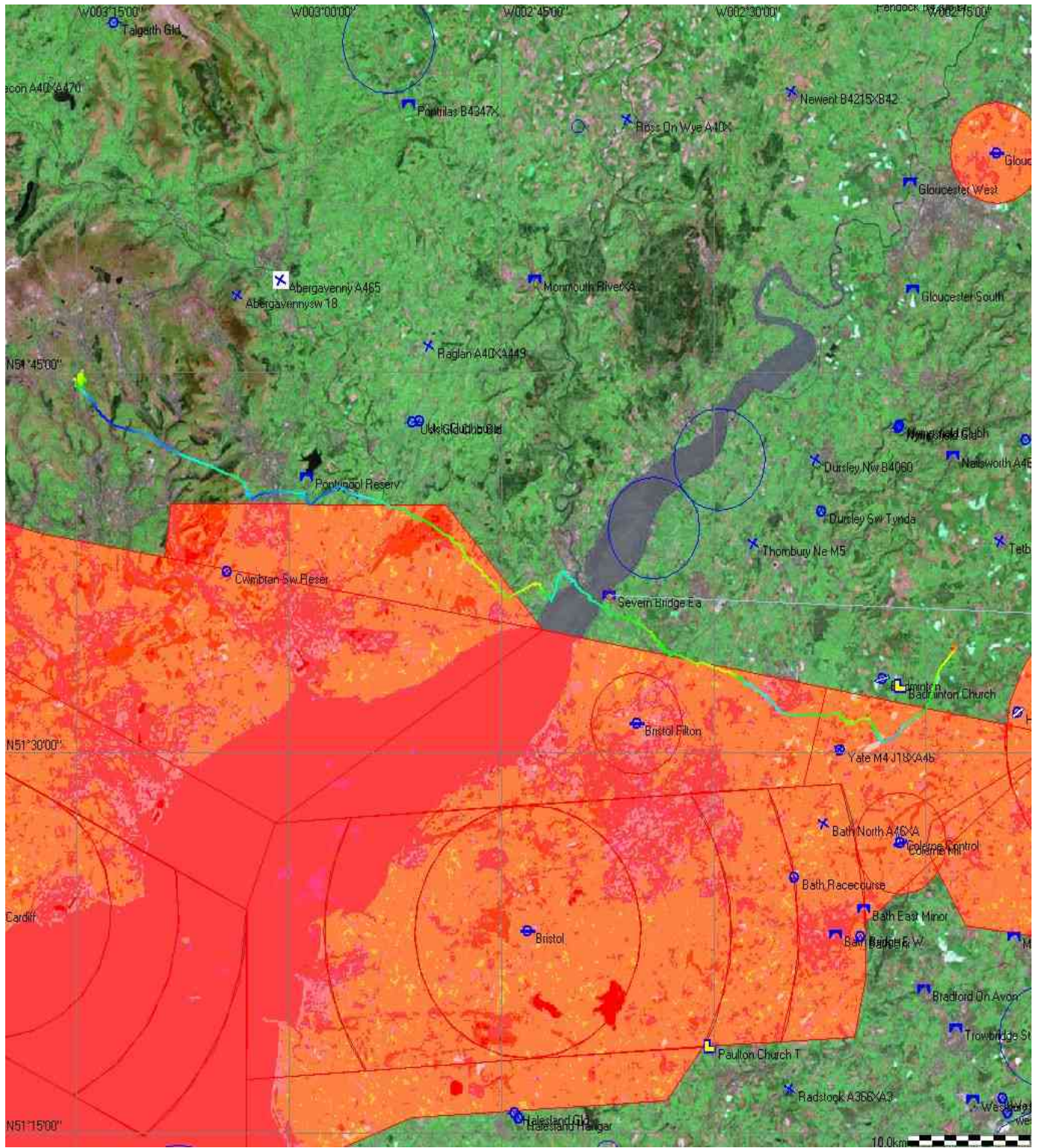
I run across the Severn and head for the hills beyond Thornbury as the whole of the coastal plain is blue. There's weak lift over the hills which gain me 400' but then I decide that it's worth heading for a good cloud further to the SE. However it quickly dawns on me that this is well off track and under Bristol airspace so I head further east instead.

Two good climbs have to be left before 4k as I'm under the airspace and need to stay clear...The third is even better and can be taken higher as the bottom of the airspace has risen to 4500'. It's now a matter of working out where goal is and gliding in at max glide. I could have gone faster if I knew where I was going but was so overloaded with navigating on the new vario that I settle for max glide (~45 mph).

Part of the overload was because I had to lift the glasses away from my eyes as the reaction lenses meant I couldn't see the PDA which was running SeeYou mobile my normal navigation tool.

So goal at 6.10PM. I failed to spot Tony Stephens in a field 600m short of goal, but it's obvious that at least 3 or 4 other people had de-rigged in the same field as me. So no surprise when Peter said that there were ten people in goal today. Ok no time points due to my late escape from the ridge. However making goal in the first round and crossing the Severn for the first time was plenty to celebrate for one day.

I was tenth on the day and 6th overall once they corrected the scores...Tony Stephens landing short cost him the Open. 2nd place in two successive years left him a bit disappointed but Dave Mathews flew consistently and deserved to win the 2009 Open title. The next two days were blown out so no flying.



A Beautiful Flight Ian Anslow



I went to a site called Frocester; it is a small bowl and you fly over trees to get up. I had my first flight with 3 other dudes; Wayne B, Jonathan and Simon. Wayne took off and looked like he was going to get up, but nope we all ended walking back up the hill – the lemming syndrome. Wayne who is local to the site left as he said that the wind was only going to get more cross. But I hung around with Jonathan and Simon, good guys – they even bought me a beer after flying 8-).

I took everything out the harness as we were going to ground handle and show off for the public. It is a viewing point and a picnic area just behind take off so it's nice and flat but can have a bit of rotor if the wind is not dead on and the wind was not dead on. We were messing about and having a laugh when Jonathan says to me this feels really good, we were both thinking the same thing, I collapsed my wing as we were overlapping and he took off. I watched him for 5 min and he just climbed out over the trees, I was drooling to go. I am sure it was restitution lift but it felt quite strong in the compression.

It is such a good feeling to just climb away from take off and we have to turn right to get the best lift above the trees so it is great to get to them with at least 20m (and climbing) of arse space. I find it nervy to fly so low over trees, just one collapse and it will be twigs for dinner, yet it was 6.30pm and the lift just kept coming. I know it is not one of the worlds most epic flights but to me is was just special somehow as I had no instruments and we were the only two gliders in the sky for a change. We topped out with about four buzzards at a guess about 250m above take off so not that high but we stayed there for about 20min, and one bird looked like it was flying Jonathan's leading edge. We flew for about 40 min and the lift felt like it was big huge thermals as it was coming through in cycles.

I was wondering where Simon was and I could see Jonathan looking as well. He had managed to get his wing stuck into the hedge in the parking area behind the picnic spot and was busy fishing it out line by line. Both Jonathan and I managed a top landing in the picnic area, but it gets hairy as it dumps you from about 15m when it is cross, like it was, so crab across then full tilt then flare and you got to miss Joe public and put it in close to the one tree that marks where the rotor starts – sheeze, I suppose that is why the rules are there.

We helped Simon fish his lines out the hedge from what he says was a failed take off attempt as "the glider just got away from me". We all had another flight but we chucked Simon off first. I pulled off another "lucky" top landing packed up at 8.00pm it was still lovely with a blue sky; we only get 20 a year so I have to use them to the Max. We all headed to the local pub for a beer, I had the "girls" version - a shandy.

Not the most epic flying day but two of the most beautiful flights I have had in ages, where I could focus on the flying, relax in the harness and just enjoy nature whilst doing something really special.



Photo - Tomáš Mikuš

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Fying in Southern Slovenia John Cheale

John Cheale got together a group of like minded Avon hang glider pilots to return to Slovenia in February with Brett Janaway of xTc (he had previously been there last August – you may remember it from the excellent talk that John gave to the club in the Autumn), and this time they headed to the Lijak area of Southern Slovenia – driving the gliders down over a two day period. The group consisted of John (flying a Wills Wing Sport 2), Ginny Clothier (Pacific Airwave Pulse 2), Ron Hartley-Davies (Wills Wing Eagle) and Chris Wright (Avian Rio). Excellent flying was had by all, with John flying over 300km in the week. John plans another trip in August to Ager in Spain.



Ginny, Ron and Brett take in the view of the Adriatic from the Lijak ramp



John over Kvak

Flying in Mayrhofen

Rob Kingston

Austria, and more precisely Mayrhofen, it was again. The by now familiar routine of taxi, coach, plane, train, light railway and taxi, door to door in 12 hours, had me established at the very comfortable Haus Martinus, almost exactly one year since my previous visit in May 2008. I was back with Kelly Farina of Austrian Arena for what I hoped would be a better flying holiday than the previous year. Having said that we then had had fantastic sunny weather, the lakes were great to swim in, the mountain biking first rate and the walking and klettersteigs excellent. The only problem was that day after day you kept thinking that it would actually be nice to fly, but the Foehn was having none of it, and continued to blow and blow. The Foehn could seriously ruin your day, and there was no where to escape it. It did mean that temperatures were in the mid 30's but it also meant that the high level winds were 100-200km/hr!

Anyway for this year no such problems were forecast, and although the upper level (3000m+) winds were still brisk we could operate at lower levels. Mayrhofen is in the Zillertal valley that runs off from the main Inn valley right up to the high mountains that reach to c.3500m and border Italy. The valley floor is at 650m and with take offs at up to 2000m (and higher in the summer when taking off on the Hintertux glacier at 3250m becomes possible) you have plenty of height to play with. The valley is wide, with big fields to land it, and you are never more than ten minutes walk from a railway station on the narrow gauge Zillertal railway which has trains running every half hour to take you back to Mayrhofen. A paragliding and a hang gliding school operate in the valley, and several of the big names in Austrian paragliding live in the valley, and so if it's reasonable someone will be flying. Of course you have to be careful because even on days when it's not really sensible to fly there may still be people in the air! We had Kelly as our guide for the week, and so we only flew when it was flyable and safe to do so, and we did other things when it was not. Kelly had flown an out and (nearly) return of 180km to Zell am See over the Gerlos Pass a few weeks earlier (taking nine hours), and so I was thinking that given any sort of reasonable conditions I might even manage a few km (actually I had been working out how far I could glide from 1400m up and knew that it would give me a personal best without having to do anything in between). To me the Alps has to be the perfect flying arena and really the reason for wanting to get into Paragliding in the first place – flying over mountains certainly seemed like an easier proposition than climbing up them, something which I have been doing regularly for most of my adult life. It was fair to say I was excited and keen to get going! Kelly is a Cockney who tells it as it is, but under his guidance we were all to learn a lot during the week.

Anyway I wasn't alone; firstly there was Andy from South Wales who had been flying for twenty years, mainly at Nany y Moel it seemed (with 1000's of hours of experience), Dave from the Peak District (100's of hours), and Remco from The Netherlands who used to fly F16's, whereas now it was A320's and paragliders (apparently two of these are more interesting to fly than the other), and lastly there was myself (who still logs every minute of airtime). I felt like an air cadet being enrolled at The Top Gun academy.



Day one arrived and we were actually going flying! Up we went to take off at Perler (1150m) and accessible by road, and the only place I flew the previous year (we did actually fly a few top to bottoms). The high level winds were forecast to be 30knots and so we were briefed that we were staying sub 2000m. Perler faces east and starts working quite early and has faces near it that work well when the valley breeze kicks in. The plan was to take off, gain some height, fly to the rocks, go up on the elevator to the top, go downwind towards The Ahorn ridge, soar that and land in Mayrhofen. Yeah right! Well it all started quite slowly, scratching around above take off, and eventually I had to make the transition to the rocks or else it was down to the landing field for me. I arrived lower than I wanted, but just soared like I would in the UK, slowly gaining height and topping out at 1600m above the rocks. A down wind blast took me onto the Filtzen, the ridge that runs up to the Ahorn, and I came onto the ridge just above the isolated house and proceeded to climb out to 1700m from there. With the wind picking up we opted to land in Mayrhofen, two minutes from our accommodation. Mission accomplished, and time for a debrief at the 'Scotland Yard' pub.

The next day started cloudy and we made our way back to Perler. Other groups took off, but with no sun they were doomed to a bottom landing. Then a slight shadow started to appear and Kelly took off, and proceeded to work some very light thermals. With conditions improving we took off and, as with the day before, we went to the rocks and climbed to 1700m, before flying right across the valley to Schweinberg and soaring to the top of that. My radio had gone flat and so I lost a lot of height flying out to the centre of the valley to try to sort it out, before deciding to give up on it. The rest of the flight consisted of traversing the valley a few more times before landing comfortably in the valley.

The next day was lost to the weather but the Wednesday, although no great shakes weather wise, did allow some top to bottoms by taking off from Penken directly above Mayrhofen. With plenty of altitude I was keen to see how fast I could get down in a spiral dive (and see if I could lock it in – the answer being no on my DHV1), and to practice some 50% asymmetrics. All good useful experience and needed to complete the tasks for my Pilot rating.



Penken take off



High above Mayrhofen, looking to the Ahorn

The next few days were good and we headed back to the Penken. This is the main mountain close to Mayrhofen and is the one that has been most sacrificed for the purposes of skiing, but the gondola does give quick and easy access to a take off at 2000m. This is large and grassy, and overlooked by a wonderful old gnarled dead tree. It was whilst kitting up here that a lorry passed by with, wait for it, dead trees (but newly cleaned up) piled in the back. These were soon dropped at strategic positions where they were to be erected – although I'm still convinced our dead tree was a 'real' one. The Austrians can be slightly strange at times! From take off it is an easy glide to the slopes of the Ahorn, where I climbed back to 1850m – and attempted to push forward to Perler against a reasonably strong valley wind. Where the valley narrowed my ground speed dropped to 10km/h, and use of the speed bar had me sinking like a stone – so I was left with no option but to run back. A pleasant time was had boating about before a landing at Mayrhofen, and the end of a nice day.

The last flying day and we were on the same Penken launch in a light southerly cross-wind, sometimes up to ninety degrees off the hill. The approach I used was for the local wind sock as well as the one 300m below to go absolutely lifeless and then to launch – it worked but was character building to say the least. Kelly and the others had all taken off before me and so we were quite

scattered, and to make matters worse Kelly had changed his glider from the day before and I started by following the wrong glider round the sky. I eventually caught up with the correct one, having both realised my mistake and from Kelly giving me an earful on the radio, and then tried to climb out on the ridge, with some success but eventually I was forced towards Perler unable to gain the top of the mountain. I eventually landed in the by now familiar landing field below Perler, and packed up for the last time.

It had been a great week; I had clocked up some fantastic flying in great scenery. I had complete trust in Kelly at all times, and this made for nice relaxed flying, but I also came away with a basic appreciation of how to assess conditions, and an even deeper respect for the mountains. Time to start planning the next trip!



The author enjoying the ride

Nepal – Highs and Throws 2009 Mike Humphries

Here's the story, with the benefit of hind-sight and after speaking to a Nepali BlueSkies tandem pilot who saw me go down.....

I had flown from Sarankot over Dickie Danda with Martin and a tandem pilot, was working my way up a spine to the green wall ridge and was expecting some rough air as the lee side thermals from the back of the ridge mixed it with the thermal I was in (drifting slowly back over the ridge) so made sure I had at least 100m above the ridge before allowing myself to be taken back.

Right hand side of the wing collapsed, not unexpected so weight shifted left and slight left brake to correct fairly sudden dive to the right, re-inflation was not immediate and I was thinking I should pump the right brake when the left hand side of the wing also collapsed, I thought it was more vertical shear but the tandem pilot thinks I may have over-corrected.

At his point things started to happen very quickly and quite violently.

This is what the tandem pilot saw, an SIV spiral (axis of spin between pilot and wing) that turned quickly into something that looked like a helicopter followed by a well judged deployment.

My perception was much more confused...

I was being thrown around under quite high g-forces, there was a 180 degree twist in the risers and moving my arms against the g-force was difficult...

Then there was a 360 degree twist in the risers and the world was spinning quite rapidly...

I seem to remember having to use both hands to reach for the reserve handle?? Jamie suggested I might have had at least one hand through the brake handle still, I don't think so but it's possible.

I threw the reserve bag as hard as I could but it seemed to end up in my lap, eventually got it to deploy but it seemed to stream out towards the wing, not sure how that could be.

There was a brief period of thinking it's in the hands of the gods now, hope I haven't offended them recently...

Much crashing and confusion...

And there I was...

Reserve draped over a tree, wing draped over it's neighbour and my feet dangling 10 inches off the ground, thinking some one up there must be looking out for me...

Unclipped the risers and my feet touched the ground as I swung back under the reserve...

Called Martin on the radio and babbled all kinds of nonsense...

The Tandem pilot came back and shouted down to me, when I told him I was OK and had my feet on the ground he flew along the ridge and asked a group of wood cutters to assist, they were very helpful, got my wing and reserve out of their trees with no damage and only minimal damage to the trees.

The guy who seemed to be in charge detailed his friend to carry my wing down, cut me a walking stick then guided me to the nearest village and a man with a phone who called a taxi.

The Nepali are a kind and hospitable people and I was delighted to share my taxi with two of the elders who apparently had business in the next village.

A rather boozy debriefing session in the restaurant with Martin and Doctor Mike.

I did fairly safe flying for the next four days but recovered confidence enough to do the triangular guided flight with Jamie Messenger on our last flying day, it was a marvellous flight and completely restored my confidence (but tempered with a greater respect for ridges, especially where three spines come together).

I think maybe I'll do an SIV course, but I also think nothing can prepare you for the sheer speed and violence of a really bad bit of air. This is the first time I've thrown my reserve for real and I'm sure that having practised it twice at the BFR saved me from serious or terminal injury.

Rgds...Mike Humphries

PS have durnk half a bottle or red whilst writing this so apologies if quality has deteriorated.

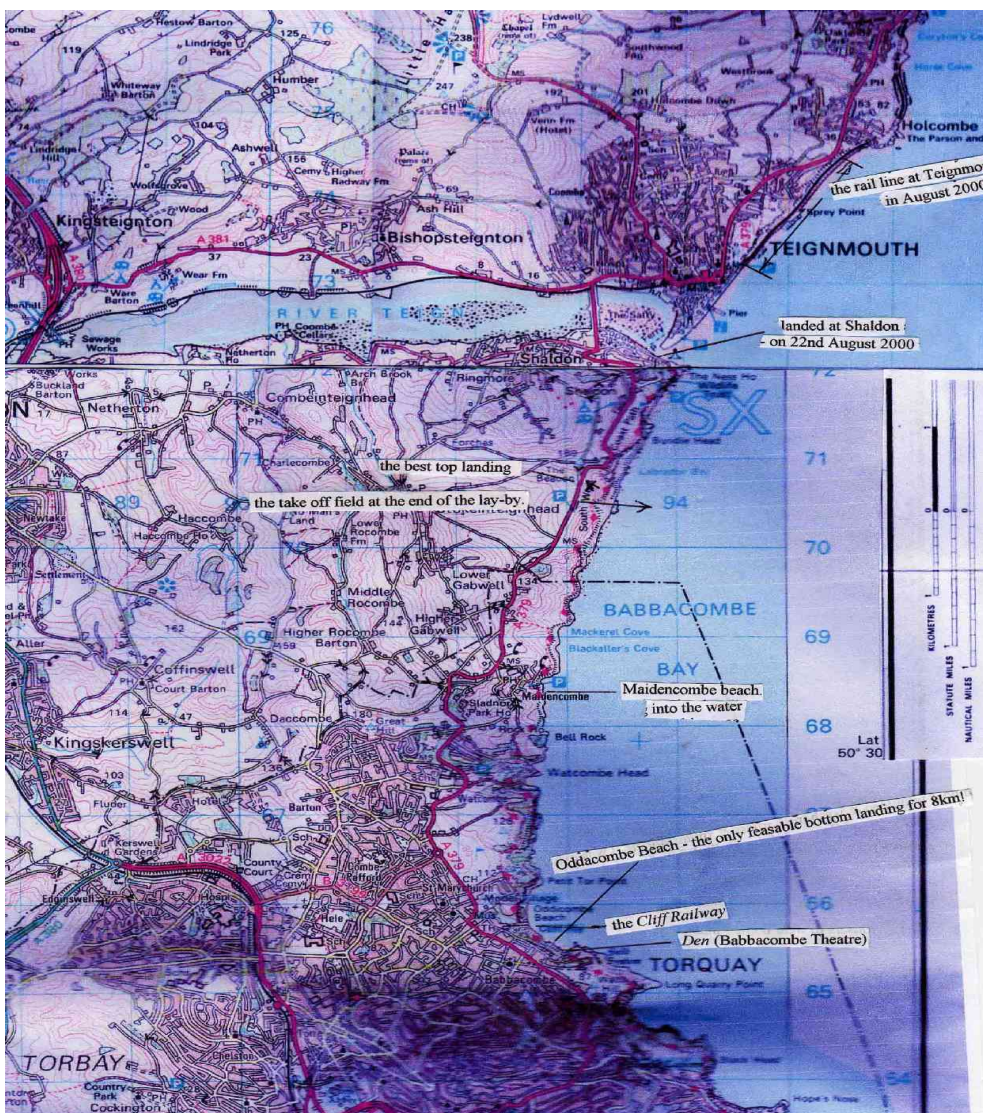
Labrador Bay (and how to end up both in the dog house and in (not so) hot water)

Bill Arkle

The following article is reproduced with the kind permission of both the author and The South Devon Hang gliding and Paragliding Club and was originally published in their club magazine in mid 2009.

It was my wife's 65th Birthday that day & my son & his wife together with the grandchildren arrived on Friday, so going flying put me in the doghouse for the rest of the weekend & only now have I been able to get to my PC.

I picked up Andy Farrow from South Brent about 1130, so we did not arrive until after mid-day. The wind was 20 mph straight up the gully to the take off field at the end of the lay-by. After sussing out the best top landing options (big field further back towards Teignmouth - gate near entrance to lay-by), Mike Connatty & Mark Nicol arrived. I was wrong about the tides – it was still in when we arrived.



Because I am the only HG to fly here before - on 22nd August 2000 when I eventually landed at Shaldon after crossing to the rail line at Teignmouth & then flying back across to Shaldon, it was decided that I was the wind dummy. I took off at 1245, flew forward to the cliffs & turned towards Teignmouth where the best lift was to be found. Here I gained 500' above TO and flew back past TO to Maidencombe & back. Gaining more height & taking lots of photos I went to the Ness at the

mouth of the Teign & back. Then after topping up my height to 550' I flew past To & Maidencombe & Watcombe & the golf course to Oddacombe. Here I flew past the cliff railway & *Den* (Babbacombe Theatre) & took photos of the next bay below with the little harbour there. I had flown as far as the *Den Theatre* on my previous flight in August 2000.



Labrador Bay

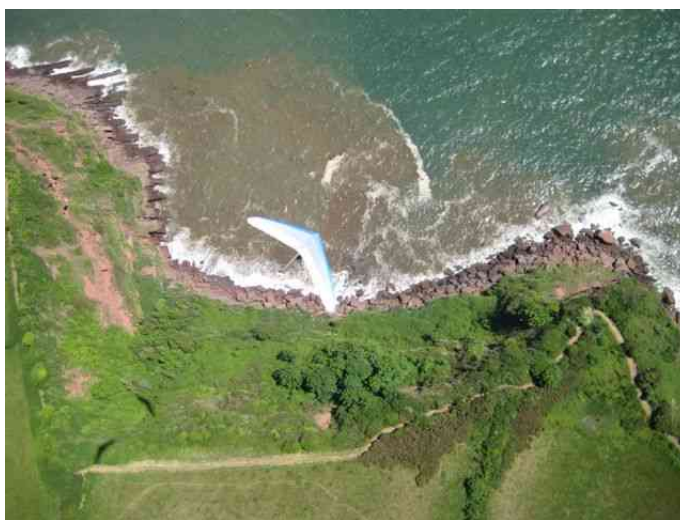


Looking towards Teignmouth

I returned easily to TO & others had started to launch. Because I was taking photos I was not wearing Gloves & eventually realised that I had accidentally deleted all the photos. Starting again at the Ness I took a couple of photos of another glider & then topped up my height (only barely 500') before setting off again.



*Glider at Maidencombe -
the splash down spot -
landing options anyone?*



Bill's Xtralite

After Crossing Maidencombe I was below 400, & did not hit the lift expected before Watcombe beach (another small gap). Approaching Petit Tor I was getting very anxious at 200' above TO & should have continued across to land on Oddacombe Beach - the only feasible bottom landing for 8km! But I turned back hoping the sheer cliffs at Watcombe would save me, but it was down all the way. Crossing Watcombe beach took me below the top of the cliffs. I did spot a small grass clearing, but a

270 degree turn would probably have taken me too low to reach it. I almost made it to Maidencombe beach. I had unzipped my harness, did a good flare before dropping into the water - trapping some air under the glider so I could unclip both my Karabiners. Keeping hold of my Karabiners, so they would not clip onto the lower wires I swam free of the Xtralite - undamaged!!!!

(In March 1978 I flew at Beesands on my Eagle HG prototype & landed in the sea near Prouts Hotel at Hallsands. Then I had a butcher's apron type harness - easy to get out of & tried to drag the glider out of the sea - by getting under it on the edge of the rocks in the sea. The waves smashed it up, wrapped it round me & nearly drowned me as I had the harness on & the karabiner clipped onto some wires.)

This time I abandoned the glider & started swimming to the rocks to the south of the beach. There must have been a current, as my glider was taken out to sea & I was making very slow progress to the rocks 100 yards away. I still had my harness on, so the lower part was acting as a sea anchor, & kicking my legs was not really enough to take me anywhere. Waves were breaking & I was getting water in my mouth. Lying on my back my helmet provide some buoyancy & I thought my parachute bag on the front of my harness could also help. Perhaps I should have unzipped my harness & somehow got my legs out of the leg loops & then swam faster, but may have drowned getting it off so decided to stick with it & rest on my back a lot. I was not cold as my thininsulate flying suit & balaclava & helmet were keeping me warm. I was glad that I did not have to take off gloves as I had got clear of the glider quickly.

Eventually I got near the rocks, where someone had swum out on the end of a rescue line. He shouted & I turned over to find his hand was only a yard away from me. I made a last effort to reach him met & I was hauled in!

At the rocks I was tired & unsteady & waves knocked me off the first rock - luckily I was still wearing my helmet. I was hauled above the breaking waves by several people and then took my harness off. After a short rest I clambered across the rocks to the beach footpath, by which time Lifeguards had arrived in a RIB. One swam across to me to check I was OK. I took off my flying suit, helmet & sunglasses (still on), and was warm enough in the sun as the medical people arrived by road from above. I then had lots of checks done to see I was OK (I had a really sore throat from the seawater but was otherwise OK). I was not allowed to move until they had checked me over, but I knew they were with my hang glider several hundred yards out to sea.

By the time I was released the glider was a total write-off - upside down on the beach with a broken keel & nearly all the battens bent & broken too. Sea weed & pebbles & sand were all mixed with the wreckage. Even if I had been allowed to go out with them to rescue it by unclipping nosewire etc it would probably have been damaged as the surf onto the beach was quite rough.

Andy soon arrived in my car & helped me. The medical people helped him carry the glider to the carpark after I had collapsed it & taken out most of the battens. I can probably use the A frame & tip battens as spares but otherwise the glider is junk.

My digital camera (which probably helped to get me into trouble as I was giving a lot of attention to taking photos, instead of flying), my mobile phone & *Lindsey Ruddock* Vario have all been wrecked too.

Getting back to take off I met the others who had safely top landed (including Mike who had overshoot & then done a *fly on the wall landing*). Mike gave me a spare set of trousers to wear home - thanks Mike! I had a top to keep me warm.



A wet Bill

I got home about 6:30 & washed out a lot of the equipment in the rain water barrel attached to my guttering, but it did not save anything. It took me an hour to unload & wash my harness & flying suit etc, I was exhausted. I gargled with TCP to help my throat before having lots of *Ernest & Julio Gallo White Grenache* Californian wine with supper. My daughter & her partner had arrived to stay for the weekend too by then. I went to bed after supper at 9:00 pm, after more gargling with TCP.

On Sunday, my throat was easier. After a morning at the local park with the boys (grandsons) & the rest of the family, we went for a meal at the *Miners Garden Restaurant* at Hemerdon - of course I had to pick up the bill. Then we all went to the beach at Wembury & I had my second swim this year in Devon. It was a lovely hot summer day & we had fun with the boogieboard in the surf there, not getting home until nearly dark. The family left this morning & I have packed up my dry harness (needed a bit of sewing too!) & flying suit. The parachute has been washed & dried too, but needs re-packing sometime.

I can fly my spare Xtralite (with the yellow leading edges) & have put the new blue bag onto it. I bought it a few years ago & took spare uprights etc from it to Laragne with me in 2005. I have flown both gliders on the same day, at Woolacombe, & know it is OK to fly & Simon Murphy rebuilt it after I came back from Laragne - to put the A frame back again with the tensioning etc. I have purchased another mobile phone - £60 with the same number, & a Sony digital camera - £150. I am now looking for a second hand Vario with altimeter!

Bill

The South Devon club have decided that this site is dangerous & needs caution! Best to fly with just the correct ESE wind direction to clear the gully. Low tide would make the limited landing options better too!

August Caption Competition

Thanks to Ian Anslow, Richard Danbury and Rod Taylor for providing some captions for the March competition. And the winner is Rich Danbury - his second effort as I'm not sure I understood the first!



"Well look here Richard- first you pull this then you flick that, suck in tummy squash down your neck and away you go. "

"Going really cheap one size fits all."

"I made it myself why would it not work?"

Ian Anslow

"Yeah, I wanted to go to the Marillion-themed fancy dress party as Fish, but the closest I could get was this flying squirrel costume."

"Yeah, my family is well-known for its in-breeding. My parents both had webbed toes, and I was born with this really cool webbed crotch."

Richard Danbury

"You're supposed to take the coat hanger out!"

Rod Taylor

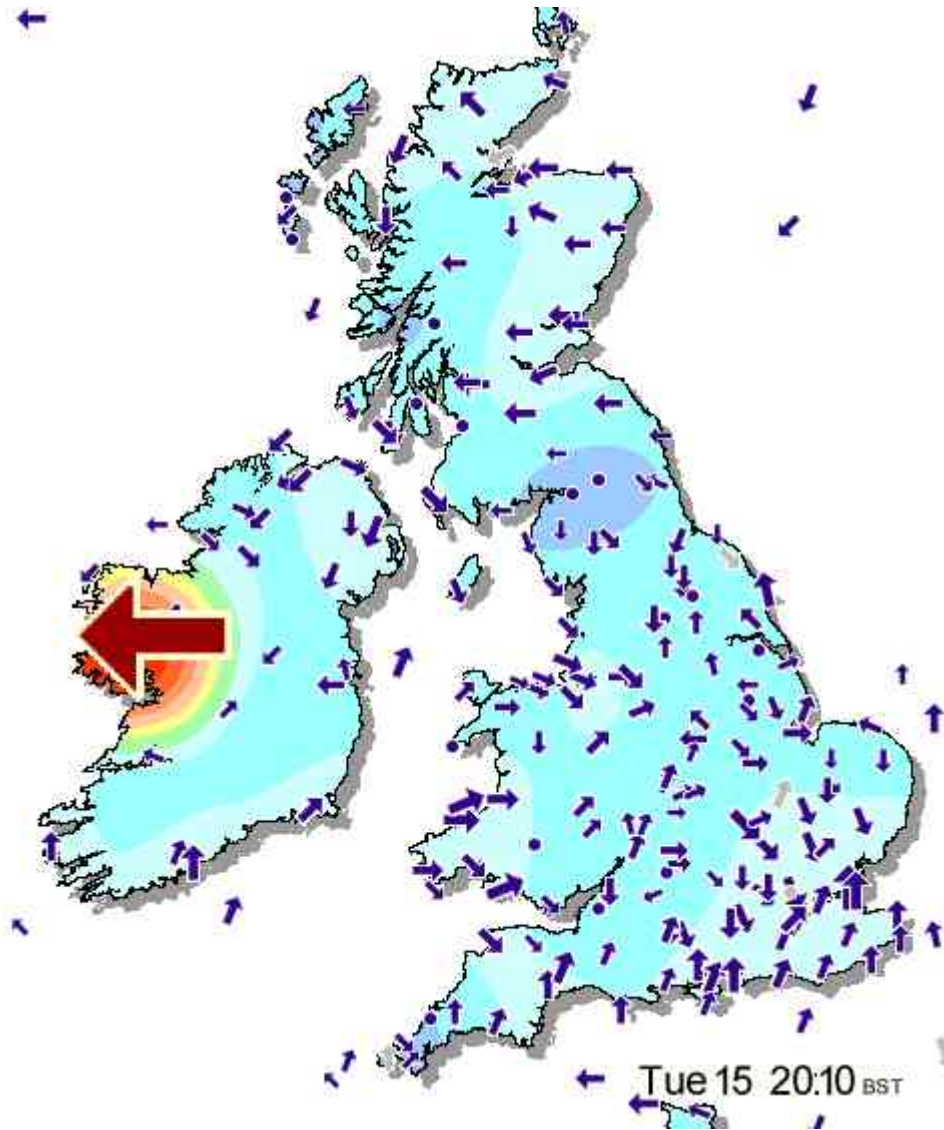
This month: Those members of the club who are acquainted with Snowdonia may recognise the building as the front elevation of Hafod y Gwent. Anyway Mark Nunan went to Snowdonia for a few days over the last Bank Holiday, arriving on the Saturday and therefore the day after the Avon team had moved out. He was taken by the "window display". Had an Avon pilot forgotten an integral part of their kit, was someone testing a new style glider or reserve, or was this reflective of the non-flying entertainment?

Maybe Nova readers could elicit an answer - send your witty captions for the picture below to editor@avonhgpg.co.uk



And Finally

Maybe the plans for that flying holiday to Western Ireland were a little bit optimistic....



Day	From	Until	Temp	Feels	UV	Rain	Cloud	Dir	Speed	Gust	Weather
Tues 15 May	1:00	3:59	5 °c	2 °c	0	2.3 mm	100 %	↗	8 mph	9 mph	☔
	4:00	6:59	5 °c	3 °c	0	3.9 mm	100 %	↗	9 mph	11 mph	☔
	7:00	9:59	8 °c	-3 °c	0	0.9 mm	100 %		249 mph	298 mph	☔
	10:00	12:59	10 °c	0 °c	0	1.2 mm	100 %		279 mph	334 mph	☁
	13:00	15:59	13 °c	4 °c	4	0.1 mm	86 %		298 mph	357 mph	☁