

Nova

The Magazine of the Avon Hang
Gliding and Paragliding Club

November 2009



Cover Photo: Derek Targett launching at Draycott. This site is currently the sole 'Members Only' site of all of those looked after by The Avon Club, the rest being Open sites. In this article our Chairman Richard addresses the policy that Avon is taking in respect of access to its sites.

Editor's Bit



Welcome to the Autumn edition of Nova. As the evenings shorten and the monsoon season is well and truly upon us it is an opportunity to look back over 2009. In this edition we give a brief summary of the AGM held in October, review the BCC Paragliding final held at The Long Mynd in August and Ali Lees gives a round up of our very successful recent club meetings and of course the Mere Bash.

Our new HG Low Airtime Committee member John Cheale suggests ways to get some more airtime and maybe get some foreign flying done (you could also join him on one of his trips planned for next year). He also describes a highly successful trip to Ager in Spain during August 2009. Our regular contributor Ian Anslow describes an 'interesting' flight at one of the local (non-Avon) sites and Ken Wilkinson describes the final throws of this years club Paragliding XC competition, with his tongue firmly in his cheek.

Enjoy the magazine and remember that those warm thermic days are probably less than four months away!

Rob Kingston

Chairman's Chunter – November 2009



The year seems to have flown by (please excuse the weak pun) and suddenly another flying season is over, we've had the Mere Bash and the AGM, and the Christmas party is less than a month away. It's been a brilliant year again, thanks to all the club members who make Avon a friendly and lively club to be in.

The Mere Bash was a great success as usual, and thankfully this year there was good weather and even some flying. There are loads of photos of the fun in this issue of Nova. Many thanks to all those who made it a success!

The AGM was fantastically well-attended, with over 40 people there. I'd like to think it was the AGM itself that attracted so many people, but I rather think it might have been the great talk on Flying in Nepal by Mike Rossdale and Mike Humphries, with photos by both Mikes and by Martin Nichols, who was also on their trip.

But even if everyone was waiting for the talk to begin, we had some very useful discussions at the AGM, the new club constitution was voted in by a large majority, and of course we elected this year's committee.

You can see the list of committee members elsewhere in this issue. All of last year's committee members are staying on, except Morgan Nicholas who stands down after some years looking after the northern sites. So my thanks go to all of them, and especially to Morgan. We also have two new members on the committee: John Cheale as HG Low-Airtime Contact, and Wayne Buckland as Sites Officer for the northern sites. Welcome to them both!

On the subject of sites, you may know that the SE Wales club decided to make Pandy members-only this year. That sparked much discussion about members-only sites in general, with heated discussion on Paragliding Forum and club forums, and two Attitude articles in Skywings. This prompted the committee to discuss Avon's sites and we clarified their status earlier this year.

At the centre of this issue of members-only and open sites is the question of how a club can apply and enforce rules. Unless a site is owned by a club, the club does not have complete freedom to decide how the site is to be used; it is the landowner who calls the shots. So site rules are usually determined by what the landowner wants, or at least by what the club judges will keep the landowner content.

A club also has little scope to enforce the rules, in that it has little or no sanction that it can apply to those who break them. The rules are simply a request to pilots to behave in a certain way for the good of all. Most of the time this system works very well indeed, because most people understand that working together is the best way to ensure continued use of our sites, and that acting against a landowner's wishes is a sure way to lose a site entirely.

Many people have spoken in favour of open sites, and the Avon committee supports the principle that sites should be kept open to all pilots wherever possible. I think we do, however, have to be pragmatic about this. We cannot blindly advocate that every site should be open, because there may be good reasons why a site has to be made members-only.

One such reason is if the landowner specifies a members-only policy, and this is likely to be the case with Mere White Sheet. So please don't be surprised if we have to make a members-only rule for those sites when we finalise the agreement with the National Trust. It won't be because we are in favour of members-only sites; it will be because that's what the NT wants.

(I am aware that our website has been a bit ambiguous on the status of our sites for some time, and there is even a statement on one of the pages saying that all our sites are members-only! Rest assured that we will update the website to clarify things as soon as we can.)

The last thing I'd like to say is: get your Christmas party tickets now! The party is on 19 December on the Grain Barge in Bristol Docks (www.grainbarge.com). It's a great venue, and we're going to have the function room all to ourselves. The menu for the meal looks really delicious, with loads of choice, and we'll be having the usual annual awards, disco and photo competition (don't forget to bring your pictures along). Contact Ali Lees (socialsecretary@avonhgpg.co.uk) for tickets. I hope to see you there!

Richard

Club News



The Avon HGPG Club AGM took place in October, and was very well attended. The formal matters were soon over and business moved on to a most entertaining talk by Mike Humphries and Mike Rossdale on flying in Nepal.

The serious part of the evening was concerned with changing the club constitution, selecting a new committee and reviewing 2009.

Agenda

- Chairman's report
- Treasurer's report
- Membership report
- Motion to adopt the new constitution – this was passed

- Election of committee for 2010 – two new members; Wayne Buckland who becomes Sites Officer (North) and John Cheale (HG Low Airtime).

The 2010 Committee

Role	Who
Chairman	Richard Danbury
Treasurer	Graham Richards
Membership Secretary	Andre Odinius
Social Secretary	Ali Lees
Sites (Overall)	Nick Somerville
Sites (North)	Wayne Buckland
PG Safety	Richard Hellen
PG Competitions	Ken Wilkinson
PG Low Airtime	Iain Mackenzie
HG Safety	Tony Moore
HG Competitions	Neil Atkinson
HG Low Airtime	John Cheale
Nova Editor	Rob Kingston
Webmaster	Rich Harding
Librarian	Ben Friedland
Chief Coach HG	Chris Jones
Chief Coach PG	Martin Nichols

Review of 2009

- Existing constitution found to be in need of updating.
 - Vote to adopt the new constitution at this AGM.
 - We may need to add a clause to deal with liability issues brought up by the White Sheet agreement with the National Trust.
- The first full year of the online membership renewals and online payments. It's working well and saves a lot of effort in manually processing forms and cheques.
- Access:
 - Negotiating with the National Trust about use of the SW and NW sides of White Sheet Downs at Mere.
 - Liability issues are holding up the agreement. We may need to add a clause to the club constitution.
 - The club was approached by Cloudbase Paragliding who want to use club sites for training. An agreement to use Selsley was drafted, but Cloudbase have not signed.
 - The committee issued a statement clarifying the status of Westbury and our other sites.
 - Committee members attended a meeting with English Heritage for groups who use Westbury. Very positive for relations with EH.
- Coaching
 - Chief Coach role split between Martin Nichols (PG) and Chris Jones (HG).
 - Very positive response to Martin's coaching events. Thanks to those who helped.
 - Chris' "where to go flying when" evening was very well attended.
 - More involvement of other coaches needed!
 - Plans for more members to do the BHPA coach course.
 - Please let us know what coaching you want.
 - HG pilots – don't forget we have HG coaches! Aerotow endorsement is available through the aerotow syndicate. Winter is a good time to do it.
- Safety
 - Some accidents and near misses this year.
 - We all need to continue to learn from our own and others' experience.
 - There has been some crowded flying on our sites recently. Experienced pilots have landed rather than take the risk.

A first committee meeting following the AGM was held on 27th October 2009. Here is a summary:

Authorised persons to sign cheques – The club constitution allows cheques to be signed by the Chairman, the Treasurer and a third member of the committee. The meeting approved Ali Lees as the third cheque signer.

Trustees of club property The club constitution allows the committee to appoint trustees of club property. Ben Friedland, Ali Lees and Rob Kingston were appointed as trustees.

Insurance of club property The meeting decided that the club will not insure its property as it is of low value.

Members hospitalized through flying incidents – It was decided to send a good wishes card to any member hospitalised through a flying incident.

Budget for 2009/10 financial year – A budget proposal is in preparation.

Membership fee for 2010/11 – The membership fee will remain unchanged.

Use of club property by individuals – The recent purchase of a projector prompted a discussion of the use of club property by individuals. It was decided that club property shall not be used for non-club purposes.

Coaching – It was decided to subsidise members who are to attend a BHPA club coach course.

Safety on crowded sites – Crowding on sites such as Westbury has raised safety concerns this year. It was decided that more efforts should be made to raise awareness of the risks, and to encourage considerate flying, and to encourage pilots to consider forgoing some airtime to ensure that others have the opportunity to fly safely. It was decided to hold a short discussion on safety at the start of each club meeting.

The Avon league – The league was discussed, in the light of the recent discussions among club members. There was support for giving the Avon league more of a club focus, and for encouraging less-experienced pilots to take part. (However, note that the recent polls showed that, if anything, there is more support among members for leaving the league as it is.)



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News from Ali Lees the club social secretary

Another bumper set of events this quarter with some excellent talks, but with the highlight being the Mere Bash which took place over the weekend of 5th/6th of September held in the bottom landing field at Mere. Fun was had by all, well those that can remember it of course.

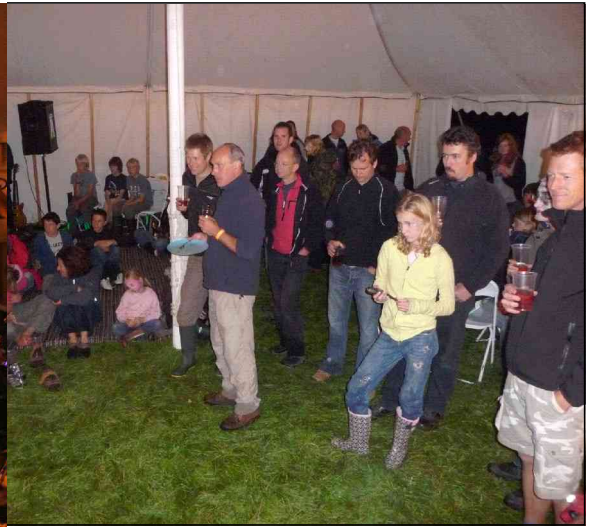


There was even some flying!



and Music...





strange goings on as well as some serious standing around...



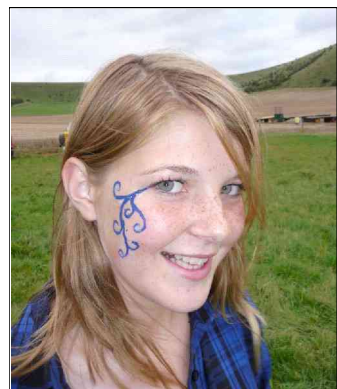
The Tim up the pole routine ...



and Beer!



Dresses and faces...



In July the Midland Branch of the Glider Pilot Regimental Association <http://www.assaultglidertrust.co.uk> talked about how they have reconstructed an Airspeed Horsa assault glider. A very nice thankyou letter was received after the evening. The club also received a thank you letter from the Wiltshire Air Ambulance for donations from the club.

Chris Jones led a club evening on where to fly, making use of Google Earth to give detailed information on local (and even not so local) flying sites. This was very well received by both old and new members alike.



Chris Jones reaching out to members

In October Mike Humphries and Mike Rossdale gave a very entertaining presentation on flying in Nepal, and using many photos provided by Martin Nichols (who could not attend).



Mike Humphries and Mike Rossdale describing paragliding in Nepal

In November 'Adventures in a Tiger Moth' was an illustrated talk by Norman Parry a pilot who flew a Tiger Moth from the UK to Australia and another trip to South Africa where he got as far as Mombassa in Kenya before being grounded by storm damage. As Norman himself says "Better to travel than arrive? Never truer if flying a Tiger Moth"



Norman Parry and his Tiger Moth

A full programme of events is planned for 2010.

Ali Lees

Haresfield can sometimes be called...

Scaresfield!

Ian Anslow

After landing, packing up and walking up the hill trying to figure out what the hell just happened to me. I sat in my car and reflected on the ten minute flight I just survived and then I scribbled this down.... Learn to trust MY GUT instincts If it does not look and feel flyable it probably isn't AND just because some other dude can handle it does NOT mean I can.

Taking off was a kind of ballistic launch i.e. straight up! The wind was pumping through.



I was only penetrating very slowly so it was very marginal BUT the only time it sinks in is once your feet have left the ground. I did not panic as I have flown in strong conditions before and the wind did not feel that gusty. I was climbing all the time as I crawled my way out front and I began to try and settle in and have a flight. Things never go the way we want them to and at about 30m above it got very gnarly and started to punch me about the sky. It felt like Mother Nature was doing her best to flick my wing out the sky.

That dark feeling from the pit of my stomach was starting to rear its ugly head, we all know the feeling it is called - PANIC. Calming myself and trying to focus on keeping my wing flying, I guided it out of the lift band; bang I had a collapse, nothing serious just an asymmetric and nothing more than I had handled before. It was however enough to let the panic start to get to me and all I could think of was "how can I get to the ground".

Haresfield is the same as any other site, if the conditions are right, it is actually quite a cool site to fly with lovely views out of the bowl. Some guys have even put in some major XC's from this site; in fact Wayne Seeley had flown away earlier the same day. My timing was just plain terrible and I did not read the changing conditions or had I and just chose to ignore them?



That old saying of: 'It is better to be on the ground wishing to be in the air, than to be in the air wishing to be on the ground', was ringing through my ears. I had flown out into the middle of the bowl, quite far forward, trying to get away from the ratty air. That is what I was starting to feel like, a rat trapped in a corner desperate for an escape route, as no matter where I flew I was get bounced and was fighting to keep the glider flying.

With panic biting at my heels I drilled in big ears way to hard and caused a frontal. My polite glider recovered without any problems, taking a deep breath I pulled big ears again but without so much force this time and sank out still rocking and rolling. I let them out at about 20m above the deck and tried to choose a spot on the ground to aim for- Landing short, cross wind, dumping the glider on a barbed wire fence, tearing the leading edge and swearing. I immediately thought "that is it, I am never flying again".

As I wrote this in the car all packed up and in one piece, re-grouping my thoughts. I realise that this "sport" is not a sport at all but a way of life, with its ups and downs. As long as we keep making it through the downs there will always be that feeling of irritability and the desperate need to go flying again. Just the very next time, *I will* trust my own instinct and make sure that it really is within my own limits, as best as I can.

Twitter ye not!

Well yes you should, and here's how.

Tim Pentreath

You can use Twitter for sharing weather and flying conditions from our sites. Pilots who follow [avonhgpg](#) can send SMS updates to twitter.com from the hill, and other followers of *avonhgpg* will receive those SMS updates on their phones (or computers). Here's how it works...

1. Go to www.twitter.com and create an account.
2. Go to Settings > Devices on your twitter page and register your mobile phone and set Device updates ON (this will allow you to send SMS messages from your mobile phone).
3. Go to www.twitter.com/avonhgpg and click the Follow button.
4. When you've clicked the Follow button a grey box appears where the Follow button was – click on it and then set your Device updates to ON (you'll only see this box if you've set Device update ON).
5. It may take up to 8 hours until you receive a welcome message from *avonhgpg* – once you get this message any **direct messages** you send to *avonhgpg* (ie. "d avonhgpg message") will be received by all followers.
6. You can find help on using your mobile phone for Twitter here – <http://help.twitter.com/forums/59008/entries>

That's it, should only take a couple of minutes...

NB. Only phones on O2 or Vodafone networks (or other networks that piggyback on those carriers) will receive SMS updates. However you can send updates regardless of what network you're on.

WHITE HORSE MARQUEES (Sponsors of the Mere Bash)

Why not try flying something different in 2010 like Bertie's new open-cockpit microlight (below left)?

Full training up to NPPL given in this fantastic fun flying machine!
Or how about flying on water with a Sky Ski Hydrofoil (below right)?
Trial flights by appointment.



Tel. 01985 840705
whitehorsemarquees.co.uk
foilflyer.co.uk



The BCC Final – The Long Mynd August 8-9th 2009

The final of the BCC was hosted by The Long Mynd club over what turned out to be an excellent week end of weather in an otherwise dismal August. Avon 'A' had qualified for the Paragliding final with a maximum of available points, and were joined in the final by six other qualifiers as well as a wild card place for the hosts.

The competition proved to be an incredibly close fought event with consistently good flights clocked up by pilots from all clubs, but marred by tragic events late on in the day on Saturday.

The Avon team comprised Tim Pentreath (captain), Ken Wilkinson(BCC organiser), Graham Richards, Richard Danbury, Mike Humphries and Rob Kingston. Rob was a late replacement for Rod Taylor and had, together with Paddy Russell, only travelled up with the promise of both free flying and free beer and a hog roast. Other regulars of the A-team were away on holiday or unavailable, not least because the event had to be slipped from the previous week end due to a poor forecast. Some pilots had warmed up before the competition on the Friday with some good cross-country distances under a classic sky, and all was set for a cracking competition.

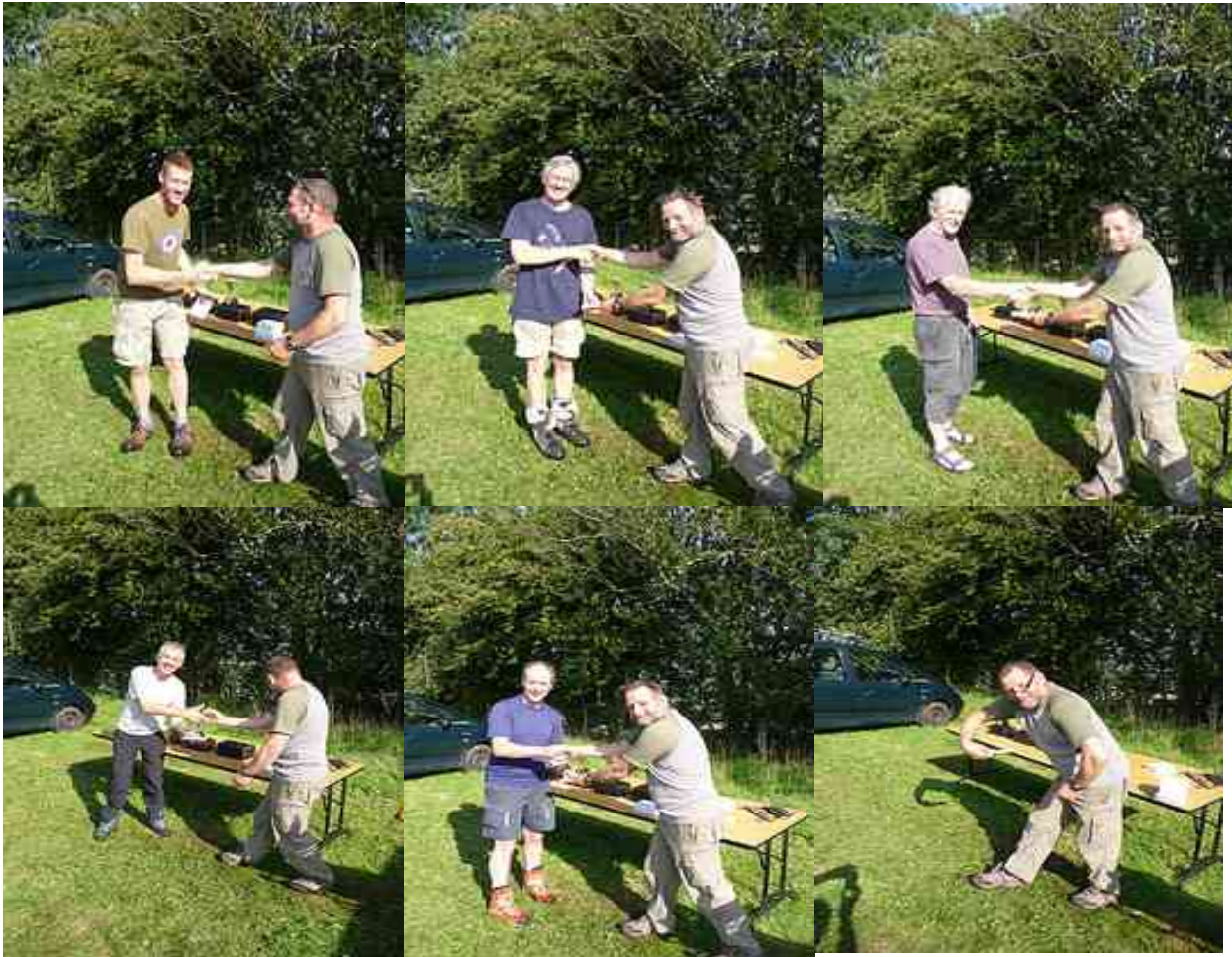
Saturday started with a low cloud base but conditions soon improved and made for an excellent day of competition. The task was open XC distance and after a thorough briefing most pilots headed off towards the NE, roughly following Wenlock Edge towards Telford and thus avoiding Birmingham airspace which lies to the east. The majority of the Avon club took this line with the furthest landing just past Telford for over 40km. News that one of the team had achieved over 80km had us thinking that the comp was in the bag, until he revealed later (rather embarrassed) that he had misread his GPS and the 80km was in fact the cumulative distance flown, including turns, and not the straight line distance! Pilots from other clubs were also achieving good distances and Ali Forence from Wessex doubled his personal best with a flight of 85km, this time heading to the SE and landing near Stratford-upon-Avon.

Happy pilots started to return to the hill to be met with the terrible news of a mid-air collision, that had occurred after most of the pilots had left the hill. This ultimately turned out to be a double fatality involving Steve Allen of the South East Wales Club and Dennis Wray of the Dales Club. Many of the Avon club had been chatting and sharing a drink with Steve the night before. On the Saturday night a rather subdued gathering shared a beer and some of the generous hog roast. The competition on the Sunday was cancelled out of respect.

Thus ended the BCC for 2009, with the Derbyshire club winning and Avon as runners-up in a desperately close fought competition, which had been expertly organised by Ken Wilkinson.

1	Derbyshire Soaring Club	133km
2	Avon	124km
3	Long Mynd	112km
4	Wessex	109km
5	Southern	82km
6	SE Wales	63km
7	Dales	44km
Best Pilot	Ali Florence	

Best HG club	Kernow	
Best HG pilot	Pete Coad	



The Avon team receiving their trophies from Ken Wilkinson (presentation pictures by Richard Danbury, flying shots by Tim Pentreath)



The Long Mynd Takeoff with a classic sky looming



Above takeoff with the Gliding Club visible



Heading to Wenlock Edge



The old cooling towers near Ironbridge

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More Air Time for Low Air Time Hang Glider Pilots

John Cheale

So LAT pilots (amongst whom I count myself), how to get your next few flying hours now the sun has gone away?

The last three summers have been difficult for hangies, especially if you are not a super experienced sky god who can exploit trickier sites and conditions, or are fortunate enough to be able to fly mid week. The shortening days do not of course bode well, however here are some alternatives to hunkering down and waiting for the spring...

1. Go flying in Britain

The wind still blows in winter and although you wouldn't guess it from exciting stories one reads, the vast majority of hang gliding done in the UK is ridge soaring. On 2 of 3 attempts you may well find the site you've spent hours driving to will be too light/gusty/off/raining/busy/scary to fly, but at least you've had a day out and a bracing walk in the countryside.

2. Go flying somewhere else

Taking hang gliders abroad is pricey. However, given the climate and topology of the UK, if you are to experience all that hang gliding has to offer, sooner or later you'll need to travel.

The logistical challenges of hang gliding and demand on pilot skill & judgement placed by mountain flying make a fully guided trip a good idea for all but the most experienced. Even then, paying someone who knows the sites well to haul your machine around and offer advice is worth a few quid.

The choice is nothing like that for paragliders, but there are a few operations that provide organised hang glider trips with varying levels of coaching & guiding...

Winter/Spring Destinations:

Lanzarote is a traditional winter destination for hang gliders. The big downside is taking your glider as baggage on a plane. It's a big hassle and there is a small but real possibility of your glider getting trashed by baggage handlers (it has happened). Of course if you never take it out of the garage it'll never get a scratch...

Southern Slovenia is driveable – just. Best idea is to fly down on Easyjet and get a friend to take all the gliders on his car. Huge ridge runs available. Lijak works a ridiculous 300 days a year. This is where the Germans go while the Alps warm up.

Andalucia has a spectacular landscape all of its own. Dry, rocky and real. Once you drive inland from the hell of Malaga airport, Spain is a wonderfully chilled out place to escape to. Taking your glider as airline baggage is the only realistic possibility (unless a 4 day drive appeals).

Trip Organisers:

Graham Phipps (Cornwall Hang Gliding & Paragliding Services) takes people to Lanzarotte every winter. Mostly paragliders but worth chatting to. Graham is a hugely experienced HG instructor.
<http://www.flychaps.f9.co.uk/>

Brett Janaway (xTc Paragliding) runs exclusive hang gliding trips in Southern Slovenia in March/April time. Brett is mainly a paraglider man, but knowledgeable about all sorts of free flight and as a local has in depth site knowledge.
<http://xtc-paragliding.com/>

John Barrett (South Downs Hang Gliding) runs hangie trips to Lanzarote in Jan/Feb and Andalucía in March/April. Another hugely experienced HG instructor with a deep love of Spain and a unique style of road trip holiday – every one different.

<http://www.southdownshanggliding.co.uk/>

And finally...

While you're not flying, FIX YOUR KIT. No excuse to turn up on a perfect day next year and that iffy harness zip still jams, or your radio PTT doesn't work. Steve Elkins (Avian) will be more than happy to supply wire sets & uprights for any glider.

Well not quite finally, as I want to give a plug for a flying holiday in Spring 2010:

Announcement: 2010 Hang Gliding trip to Southern Slovenia

Planning for the 3rd Avon Hang Gliding trip to Slovenia is well under way.

Arriving in Slovenia on Friday 26th March, the 8 flying days are 27th March – 03rd April 2010.

The cover of the last edition of Nova showed the Lijak-Nanos run, still snow covered in places but already reliably thermic on the ridge. With 300 flyable days a year, this has to be once of the best places to get pre-season airtime in Europe.

The trip is again being organized by xTc Paragliding, who despite the name, are getting increasingly used to guiding, retrieving and accommodating hang gliders.

Details will be posted on the club forum & xTc Paragliding web site. If you want to know more, register your interest, find a lift for your glider or volunteer to drive, just let me know.

John Cheale

HG Low Airtime Contact

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hgla@avonhgpg.co.uk

Hang Gliding in Ager, Summer 2009

John Cheale

The night is hot. Bats whirr past the open window. A gecko scuttles up the wall and disappears under the eaves. England is a long way away.

Flashback to spring in Dorset... After a thwarted attempt to fly a light and landing-less White Horse, we decide to take a walk on Ballards Down before heading home. From the coastal path we spot the silhouette of a rigid wing on the sky line. When we reach the top the pilot is busily packing up, wary of another pair of curious onlookers. 5 minutes later and Stuart is signed to take his brand new Atos on to a trip to Spain with an unknown bunch of hang glider pilots. Dozens of emails, phone calls and forum postings later we have a full crew: Stuart, Ken, Ron, Martin, Mick, Conrad, Damian, Ginny & John. Experience ranges widely, from 5 to 2000 hours with various grades of weekend warrior in between.

After their respective seasons guiding in Slovenia and Morocco, xTc Paragliding (Brett Janaway) and Passion Paragliding (Toby Colombé) join forces at the end of August in Ager under the Serra De Montsec in the Spanish Pyrenees. Conditions are still powerful but maybe slightly less manic than mid-summer, with less chance of the high winds that blighted the HG Nationals this year. Although paragliders are still Brett's main concern, he is keen to encourage more hang glider pilots to visit both centres and has the vans equipped with large padded racks.



Ager town

Ager has been on the hang gliding circuit from the earliest days, having hosted numerous competitions. Recent improvements have transformed the previously gruelling track to launch into an easy 25 minute drive on tarmac. At 5100'ASL Coll D'Ares is the main HG take off, a wide steep slope overlooking a shelf 900' below. Wooded slopes then fall to a broad valley with plenty of nice big fields stretching out from the medieval town of Ager sitting at 2000'. Just outside town is the main campsite and paragliding landing field, which is a bit on the small side for a modern hang glider. Fortunately this year hang gliders have their own much larger landing field a mile and a half away. This was however not without its challenges, as we were to find out.



Heading for Gabriello

The first few days were stable and lift near take off sparse. Getting up required a glide SE across the shelf to Gabriello, a more reliable trigger on the forward face. Most of us, (with the exception of 'rocket' Ron Hartley-Davies and sky god Stuart on his Atos) initially struggled. Unfairly, even sled-runs ended in a boisterously thermic landing field ready to extend, turn or terminate the final glide of unwary, slow or rusty hang glider pilots. The toll in uprights, sprains and finally a broken bone fell on infrequent flyers plus one challenged with an unfamiliar 'hotter' glider & harness. This outcome is consistent with common advice; a good way not to break things is to stay current and increase difficulty in small increments.



Danien wrestles with his Litespeed



Taming the LZ

Then the front came through, it rained and everything changed... The new unstable air was a joy. Strong lift to 9000'+ allowed full exploration of the ridge and valley. Brett had provided us with waypoints and an XC over the back to Tremp looked tempting. "Another 1000' just to be sure – hmm those wispy bits look a bit close... oh dear". Climbing right up into the middle of a big dark cumulus next to a mountain on a hang glider is not a way to live a long and stress-free life. But for Ken and me, the temptation of cloud base, so elusive in England had been too great. (For any PGs wondering what's the big deal: Hang gliders lack pendulum stability, so the pilot loses all sense of bank and heading VERY quickly once the view goes away). On the following day there was much discussion about the appropriate way to retrieve such a situation. This ranged from the unhelpful 'just don't do it' through the dubious 'spiral dive' to my chosen method – pick a heading, lock arms in the corners of the control frame knees over the base bar and get the **** out of there.

I was determined to make the last day's flight a good one. From take off, Gabrielo and the Campsite thermals provided an elevator ride to join Stuart, Martin and Damian high over the Town. We finally split up to explore singly. Despite the advantages of hunting as a pack, I enjoy the reverie of solitary flight. It was in this mode that I spotted what I at first thought to be a flock of crows half a mile away, launching from the ridge into an untidy gaggle. Sinking steadily, I pulled on more VB and headed for the lift they marked. I found the birds to be further away and considerably bigger than I had realized as I finally plunged into a group of 20 or 30 vultures, spiralling up through the roughest lift I've ever stuck with. Their intense calm gave me the confidence to hang on and for a few precious seconds I exchanged glances with one bird that held formation just forward of and below my right wing. After that, everything that looked like it should work did, from the smooth pull of forming clouds to huge rough boosts stolen cautiously from the edge of a dark monster over the Observatory later in the day.



Serra De Montsec

Planning for adventures in 2010 is well underway. Come and join us.

John Cheale

HG Low Airtime Contact

07790 463395

hgla@avonhpgg.co.uk

End of Season wind up.....



From Ken Wilkinson

There was a close end of season race for the prize of 'Avon XC champion', which caused much amusement (to me) and annoyance to some others.

It all started when I saw Martin Nichols over in Grand Bornand. When the weather is good this is surely a great place to be, and the vagaries of the British weather seemed far away. I had some of the best and highest flying I had ever had in August in the Alps, but conversation turned back to the state of the Avon League. Martin could not believe he was winning it, with just over 200km, having left the UK at the start of the summer.

In 2008 Avon won the National Club XC league for the top four pilots, with a total of 1610km. I had scraped into the top 4 with 304km, beating Wayne Sealey for once! However we discovered, that for 2009, two of 'our' best pilots (Wayne and Garry) turned out no longer to be Avon members and they were removed from our League. Then Alex Coltman went all luvvy-duvvy non competitive and didn't enter his flights. Jim Mallinson decided to reproduce again and was restricted to nappy changing duties, with just the occasional foray into the air. One was 104k, a mere jaunt for the great Himalayan guru, and reputedly the length of one of his dreadlocks when straightened out. It turned out to be the best Avon flight of the year.

With most of the club 'stars' accounted for, this left the glittering prizes, fame, adulation, press interest etc to be hoovered up by newcomers and the also-rans! (I allowed my imagination to go a bit overboard for the last bit...errr..... sorry)

And so, on to the wind up.

I had pretty well given up after a nasty accident early in the year dented my enthusiasm and I became pretty slack on XCs. However I started to get a bit wound up again, (which is a much more natural state for me) after the Alps. With a 73k Rybury flight under my belt I realized that I could really take the prize, even with a few 30k flights.

A long spate of NE winds arrived in mid September and I went for a Pandy Ridge run, without crossing the gap. That scored over 30k, pushing ahead of Martin, but still behind Tim Pentreath. A couple of days later I was preparing to take off again and Martin approached saying he didn't think 'Pansy widge wuns' should be entered as XCs. He then asked me if I had a plan. I said 'yes' and took

off, doing the run to the gap twice. He did follow, and went across the high ground to Talgarth at the end, eventually scoring more than me. I still had to catch up the dastardly Tim however. Now Tim is an old campaigner, and has often been known to use such underhand techniques as skill, determination and sheer ability to con his way to a clearly unjustified good distance. Against such competition I would have to try hard!

October 1st was one of the excellent late days we had this year and some lovely thermalling culminated in my old teacher, Robin Brown and myself circling up to a 4000ft base, over a sun soaked Tetbury. We had a lovely slow climb back to base, and a long transition to land just north of Stroud, for just over 30k. A beautiful flight in light northerly winds with 5 up lift at 3.30 in the afternoon. RASP had assured me there would be no lift at all at that time!!

I was jumping hedges at the end as I knew I was close to beating Tim. Later I found I was 0.2km ahead of him!! Tee hee! I was sure that was it as surely there could not be any more XC flying that year. Alas, a reinvigorated Tim was to be seen on Telegraph hill, in mid October, cruising to a well deserved winning flight of just over 32km.

I was content with second place, but then later found that my 73km flight from Rybury had been disqualified, as I had entered Heathrow approach. OOOps!! I am now in the process of getting a Navigo programmed so it shouts at me if I go near airspace!! Oh well, a more usual 5th place for me in the end, and congrats to Tim, Martin and Tim Carr who will rake in all the plaudits they deserve.

Roll on next season!!!!

Ken Wilkinson

November Caption Competition

August's Caption Competition featured a front elevation of Hafod y Gwent in North Wales, a popular hang out for Avon Paraglider pilots over the years. Even though the postbag was not bursting at the seams the "window display" did elicit responses from Martin Nichols and Rod Taylor (and anon). Thanks for your support.

"Rich Harding's other flying suit had already been deployed" Martin Nichols

it's the weather bra

if wet "it's raining"

if dry "it's sunny"

can't see it "it's foggy"

Rod Taylor

"Harness is of a Cross-braced type suitable only for tandem flying; please check distance between risers, and do not overload. Ensure straps are fully fastened before taking off". Anon



It was a tight thing but the stand out entry comes from Rod Taylor. Well done Rod, even though we have no prize for you to get your hands on.

This month: Thanks to Mike Humphries for providing the photo of Richard and Rod exchanging ideas with Tim about his new pod harness. Readers are invited to Advance any witty or Impressive captions to editor@avonhgpg.co.uk



And Finally

It's never too young to start a new sport. Grant and Louisa (?) plus one – photo Richard Danbury

