



nova

The magazine of the Avon

Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

January 2013

COVER IMAGE: Mike Rossdale with the sky to himself at Mere Rifle Range on the Saturday evening of the Mere Bash, September 2012 - Rob Kingston

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Wings above the Mere Bash (Rob Kingston) - see page 14

CHAIRMAN'S CHUNTER



*Ken Wilkinson,
Chairman Avon HGPG*

Although not in the first flush of youth I really still like the competitive wind up of a great XC day. That's why I still run the Advance BCC. I think XC flying and the skills it involves allow us to access one of the truest adventure experiences that it is possible to



have. I said to Pete Douglas, as we landed after a 45k XC last year that we live like kings, being able to access such a wonderful sport, and he corrected me. 'No Ken, we don't live like kings when we go XC, we live like GODS' I had to agree!

The excellent attendance at the April (Tim Pentreath, XC preparation) and May meetings, (Alex Coltman, Wayne Seeley and Tim again) show that there is a passion in the club for this. Both meetings were standing room only! I hope we will continue to get XC gurus along to share their wisdom and experiences. Every month I have been able to announce new personal bests (pbs) and this month there will be yet more new ones from Mike Humphries, Ben Friedland, Remi Pickett, Alex Kennedy, and of course, Tim Pentreath, who has finally cracked the 100k mark, to be a (legal) member of the '100k' club.

We have had progress on relations with Cloudbase School, and are on the way to having an agreement for limited soaring flights at Westbury. This should help the future of the club, in recruiting new members. The bottom landing field is still an ongoing issue but Tony Moore has secured a trial of side landing for PGs only. The less the emergency landing field is used the better, and Tony has been a stalwart in getting these essential landing options sorted out. Well done to him! Nick Somerville continues his excellent work on airspace agreements.

The Mere Bash should be a something to look forward to, on 7/8 Sept. The more the merrier! With a live band, great cheap beer, and a camp over it really can be great fun. The committee will be shortly putting their time in to enable this to happen. Be there! I would hope to see a mix of Wessex, Thames Valley, S E Wales, Cloudbase, and others to make this a real social 'do'. Anyone who attends can of course win the Mere Bash Cup, for the longest XC flight of the weekend.

One development I wanted to see happen was purchase of a club tandem. Many of the committee were not happy with possible liability issues but a separate group has been formed and 8 people have clubbed together to buy a top quality tandem rig. Expect to see this in the sky at our sites!

I wish all the best in smashing their pbs this season, (after I gain membership to the 100 club myself!)

CLUB NEWS

SITES REMINDERS

To fly Morgan's ridge or Spencer's bowl at Mere you need to be a full club member, have the helmet sticker for 2012 (be 'Pilot' rated) and then only Monday-Wednesdays.

Two blocks of airspace can be opened at Westbury but people are reminded that these can only be used by full Avon members.

Updates were made this year to the Ubley airspace arrangements. Please make sure you have a copy of the current airspace crib sheet available here: http://www.avonhgpg.co.uk/files/bath_gap_v6.pdf

For full details refer to the club website.

WESTBURY LITTER PICK



There was a great turn out on the 17th November with over 15 pilots collecting bin bags and magic grippy litter sticks from coordinator Tony Moore to clear the top field of litter. A substantial amount of crap was removed and the pickers were rewarded with good flying afterwards. A newly signed-off Tim Pentreath began flying with Mike Humphries (below left) to really get the ball moving on the club tandem while Sean Simmons kindly took me for a spin on his.

It was lucky that there were plenty of people out that day as the bush on take-off claimed another victim!



FROCESTER TREE CLEARING

Richard Miller has provided some snaps of the ongoing tree clearance project at Frocester:

We have at least another two sessions needed to complete the felling and logging up the timber plus preparing the bonfire piles for early in the New Year when the wood has dried enough. I will be putting out another call for intense arboreal activity in a couple of weeks. We could have done with more willing helpers - so let's see what we can achieve with a big push.



The view of the Area of Intense Arboreal Activity from the point of entry to the field - a big difference, but still more to do



Wayne Buckland with dangerous toy



Wayne Buckland



Mike Humphries - the original chainsaw massacre of the trees (we had a hard time stopping him)



A group shot - Ian A, Wayne B, Richard M and Ken

CLUB DINNER



Avonites turned out in force for the later-than-usual Christmas meal at the Bristol Hotel to hear about extreme hang gliding and to collect their hard-earned silverware for the year. The "young-at-heart" were in no need of encouragement to make use of the supplied pea shooters and aviation was committed (if only on a small scale)

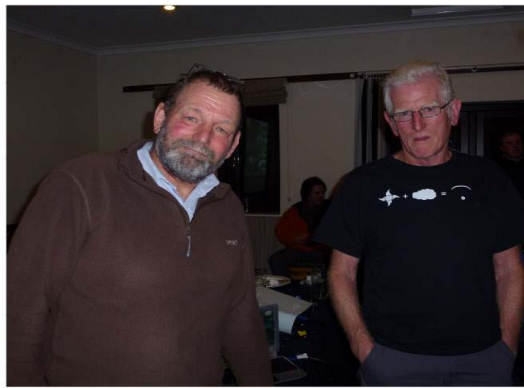


CLUB PRIZES 2011

HG XC league		Neil Atkinson (618.7km)
PG XC league	1st place	Jim Mallinson (413.5km)
	2nd place	Graham Richards (362.2km)
	3rd place	Rob Kingston (325.4km)
PG longest XC flight		Jim Mallinson (126.4km)
PG longest flight DHV1/2		Tom Mayne, Nova Mamboo (108.6km)
PG most improved pilot		Rob Kingston (173.8km increase)
HG most improved pilot		Tim Obermeier
Longest flight during Easter W/E	Dave Yeandle shield	Graham Richards (69km)
Best Nova article		Lindsay Rossdale
Best photo		Jonathan Tew



CLUB MEETINGS 2012



Social secretary Ian Anslow did a first class job last year of arranging a great range of speakers including a panel of skygods, Richard Bungay talking X-Alps,

Kirsty Cameron, Mike Townsend on emergency parachutes, Ken going slowly mad walking around in a circle and John Welch on fear.

SCOTLAND ON A WHIM: THE LOGISTICS



Ken Wilkinson discusses the best way to head off for a Highland fling (Photo: Tim Pentreath)

Tim has covered our little jaunt to Scotland from a flying point of view on his Flyaszent blog, accompanied by Guy Anderson, and Neil Roberts. I thought it would be good to go over the logistics of such a trip.

For the past couple of years there have been some amazing flights done in Scotland, declared FAI triangles of nearly 100k have really racked up the scores in the XC League. In truth the main thing to do there are the big triangles. Downwind is definitely an adventurous option, as there are many valleys with no roads, and the walk out could be many many hours, especially if you go the wrong way! On the main day we were there, many went down Glencoe, and on to Oban, and even the Mull of Kintyre! As scenic as a scenic thing can be! There are some flights that have been done over the Cairngorms from the East. These really are for those that are finding normal XC flying of over 100k rather passé, and need an extra 'kick' with potential 30k bog walks to get out of the boonies as well as masses of driving.

For the mere mortal, (like me, with a dodgy knee) these options are not on the agenda. It's the closed circuit flights that are attractive!

We decided very quickly to go and left Friday lunchtime. You need a high pressure above Scotland, or a little to the north, so that there are light winds, preferably from the East. RASP will hopefully be

predicting a mega high cloudbase, and strong thermals. Weather in the UK is likely to be crap as it will be in a low pressure.

7 Hrs drive from Bristol to the Bridge of Orchy with 3 or 4 in a car isn't too bad. In total we did about 950 miles. With a 45 MPG car that would be 21 gallons, or about 140 quid. That and accommodation is the main cost.

You can book a place at the Bridge of Orchy bunkhouse Tel: 01838 400208 email info@bridgeoforchy.co.uk The Bridge and other towns along the way are on the popular 'West Highland Way' walking route. Other bunkhouses/hostels can be found by a bit of Googling. Tyndrum, and Crianlarach are not far away, and the 'Kings House', at the head of Glencoe is a really special place, if you can get a bed! Plan on 25 quid a night inc breakfast. We took sleeping bags. Bridge of Orchy is a lovely spot, and you can wild camp over the bridge, thus reducing the cost of the trip considerably. If you camp it WILL be cold! The bar will be filled with a veritable who's who of paragliding as this is getting well known. Hugh Miller even flew up from Gatwick to get into the action.

The two spots that seem to be used are the White Corries ski run, near Glencoe(E and NE), and the Aanoch Mor ski lift near Fort William (for NW). It's a fiver for a single trip up the White Corries, and a short walk from the first station leads you to the take off. Ahead of the hill is the flat and desolate Rannoch Moor,

stretching for miles. If you bomb out you can land near the bottom and go up again! Don't bomb out in Rannoch Moor unless you have a wetsuit!

The cliff to the left of takeoff is a real thermal producer, and the ski lift valley itself is also a place to find lift. In truth, the whole side of the hill will produce the most amazing lift. Triangles can be started with a run down the mountains to the South and then pressing into the Moor, or you can just head out into

the moor itself. Be sure to close the triangle with a pass over Buchaille Etive Mor, the big mountain at the head of the beautiful Glencoe. On the day we were doing this thermals were very strong, and base was 6300. Easy to see the sea and all the lochs from there! A really good day but VERY COLD. Get all your winter woolies out!

See you next year if it comes again!

VIVA ESPANA!



Tim Pentreath reflects on last year's British Championships in Pedro Bernardo

This was my second trip to PB - the first time was when the British Champs came to town back in 2008 - and having had a great week then I was keen to come back for more. As before, we stayed at Alan Russell's eco-finca (farm) which is a five minute drive from town up the road to takeoff.

The A team arrived late on Friday night after an easy drive from the airport, however it wasn't so easy for the B team who didn't manage to pull off the motorway around Madrid in time to avoid a one hour traffic jam... The A team stopped for cervazas and tapas en route, then had time for another drink at the

house in PB where Guy was staying before the B team caught us up

SATURDAY 30TH JUNE

Pete, Ken, Alex, Marcus and I relax at the finca on Saturday before flying

The next day there was quite a strong N'ly wind during the afternoon but at 4ish it seemed to be dropping off so we headed up the hill.

Alex was first off and I followed a few seconds later into the rather rough air. Asked over the radio what it was like I replied "Ok, but a bit rough wayyeeehhheeeaaahhh". I think that said it all I joined Alex in a snotty climb which mellowed out as we got

higher, and as soon as we were high enough we headed the 10km south across the flats to Buenaventura. We both had really nice lofty lines and arrived at the next climb with plenty of height.



We explored the area separately for about 45 minutes before heading back to the landing field. Alex made it back with plenty of height to spare (in fact he struggled to get down), however I only made it back to the river a few km short. Still, no worries, it was very nice to have shaken off the cobwebs and sampled the big Spanish skies.

SUNDAY 1ST JULY

Sunday was the first day of the comp however the strongish N'ly persisted so a few of us headed over the mountains to Piedrahita where we enjoyed some typically boisterous conditions...

Mmmm, yummy!

Now I don't know if you remember but something else was going down on that Sunday evening... Yes, that's right, the European Cup Final between Spain and Italy! We hacked back to PB in time for the match so that we all join in the partying...

Thanks especially to Barbara, Alex, Judith, Tony and of course our host country for making it such an awesome evening! Absolutely brilliant!

The only trouble was that the forecast was looking great for Monday so we were definitely going to have to commit aviation in twelve hours time... Still, you know what they say, "twelve hours between bottle and throttle", so if we stopped now we'd time it perfectly for a 1pm window open

MONDAY 2ND- FRIDAY 6TH JULY

Over the course of the next five days we were treated to five pretty decent tasks (75, 79, 50, 52 & 51km), though a strong SW'ly wind during two of them put paid to my attempts at winning the Championships

I was up with the lead gaggle for most of the task, and it was only on the last turnpoint where we all arrived low and the promised thermal didn't materialise that my luck ran out... Some of the leaders made it, but maybe half of the twenty two pilots who made goal were in later gaggles.

Swapping stories back at the bar (me, Kussy, Alex, Andrew and Pete)

On task 2 I had a blinder of a start and was leading the field by a country mile for the first 10km. I found a nice climb over Buenaventura and waited at the top of the climb for another lone Sigma 8 pilot to catch me up.

I later found out that I was flying with local hotshot Daniel Crespo, but sadly didn't discover that soon enough to save my flight!

We flew together for about ten minutes however he then headed off in the direction of the turnpoint some 20kms away whilst I favoured carrying on along the ridge before pushing forwards.



I don't know whether he was plain lucky or had a pair of thermal spotting specs on, but by the time he was too far away for me to rejoin him he was a few km in front of me and very high! Meanwhile I had made good progress along the ridge but the trouble came when I tried to push forwards - the wind had picked up and was proving very difficult to make progress forwards. Every time you started thermalling again you ended up almost back at the same place! My thermal drift was pretty much matching my glide angle, agghh!! I battled on like this for probably about an hour, and got within



2-3km of the turnpoint before I finally had to concede that the game was over. Meanwhile Daniel had made it around the turnpoint and it was only in the final few kms that he was overtaken. Goddammit, if only I'd realised who it was and stuck with him.

Hey ho, I can't complain too much as I was still in the top half of the field, and as Marcus was one of the less lucky plots who'd landed earlier, he'd got back to PB nice and early in time to buy some grub and make a fantastic hot pot for supper! Muchos gracias Marcus!

Task 3 should have been a doddle, but that pesky SW'ly had me decked with Tony Blacker and Joanna Di Grigoli before I even got to the first turnpoint, which was only a couple of kms past Buenaventura. It wasn't like I didn't try hard - I struggled like a gud'un but it was the same story: glide angle = thermal drift. Bollocks! My problem was that again I got a great start, this time with Alex alongside me, and we headed straight for the ridge next to Buenaventura which had worked so well the day before, but we got a lousy line arriving very low. Meanwhile everyone else had headed straight for the town and got a nice lofty line arriving over the town nice and high and finding a thermal straightaway whilst we struggled on the ridge. Alex eventually managed to climb out but I got stuck in the increasing wind.

Still, every cloud has a silver lining and all that, and sure enough we eventually found a small bar where I was able to buy some of the local aqua vitae. Result!

I think I paid six euros for a litre of the stuff... Oddly no one else really liked it.

Task four on Thursday was an altogether much more successful day, finding me in goal in 25th place! Yehah! First time in this comp and not before time!



That evening, to celebrate my success (!), we had a big party back at the finca with the rest of the Avon crew... Much fun was had by all!

Friday's task was pretty much a repeat of Thursday's, and although Adrian Thomas warned us at the briefing that conditions weren't as good as yesterday meaning that it was going to be harder, actually the conditions were great and lots of people made it to goal, myself included, although I very nearly didn't!

The previous day the last three kms into goal were very lofty, and as my Flymaster was saying I'd arrive with 200m spare, I decided to fly straight through the big 5

m/s thermal I encountered just 5km from goal without turning even once.

Big mistake. Today the last three kms were sinky the whole way and I saw my arrival height decreasing steadily towards zero then underground! With about 100m to go and being about 10m up the sensible thing to have done would be to turn into wind and land nicely, albeit just short of goal. Did I do the sensible thing? Like f*!k I did - I carried straight on and ended up doing a messy downwind landing right on the 400m cylinder. Idiot. Fortunately nothing was broken apart from a few scratches, but I really had no idea whether I was in or not. If I was, then I could almost justify it and argue that it was the perfect final glide. If not, well, I was just plain stupid!

So it was with a bit of trepidation that I queued up at the HQ to download my tracks. Right, let's try the Flymaster first... Outside. Bugger. Now for the Garmin. Quicker this time as it records fewer data points... Inside! Yay!!! Phew! It was worth it, sort of. I'm just very glad I didn't damage myself or any of my kit as it wasn't exactly a textbook landing. Note to self - remember, it's just for fun, so don't take any extra risks!

That evening there was a meal for everyone at a restaurant just out of town, and seeing as 58 people got to goal everyone was in high spirits.



On the menu for some was roast suckling pig, and I have to say it was quite superb, but the highlight of the evening for me was seeing the look on Tony Blacker's face as his plate was handed to him - it was the head of the pig! Sadly Tony didn't quite consider it the delicacy that the locals clearly thought it was. Being a decent sort of chap I offered him some nice meaty chunks from my plate which he gladly accepted! I did try a bit of the brain myself but it wasn't quite as good as the rest of the beast...

SATURDAY 7TH

We were hopeful to get a final task in on Saturday but sadly the evil wind goblin, Toby, spoiled it for everyone...

Yep, sadly the task was cancelled after it became apparent that the SW'yly wind had picked up too much to fly the task safely. Quite a few people opted for an exciting flight down to the landing field, but most of the deep fincas opted to pack up and head back to the finca for some R and R.

Later on we strolled into town for pre-prizegiving drinks and tapas at the other mainly Avon house where Graham, Rob, Wayne, Dave, Guy and Steve were staying (thanks chaps!) before heading to the square for the main event.



Ken gets a consolation prize for getting to goal twice but missing turnpoints en route on both occasions! Well, he is old...



Alex makes it onto the Sports Class podium in 3rd place along with Dave Smart (1st) and Daniel Crespo (2nd)



Guy is 2nd overall behind Ronny Geijsen. Local pilot Francisco is 3rd

It was a great evening but sadly I can't remember much more about it! I can't think why

THE LAST DAY...

With slightly sore heads we breakfasted, packed up and cleaned the finca before heading back to Madrid where I spent a pleasant couple of hours in the company of Kussy and Yuki before we met up with the others for some culture (yes, we visited the Prado - crazy I know!) and a meal.

So, all in all a great week with some excellent flying (seven days out of eight) and lots of fun times with good friends! If you're an Advanced Pilot and haven't been to a round of the British Championships yet then I'd thoroughly recommend it! And once again, thanks very much to Alan for letting us descend on your wonderful finca again!



Graham, Tim and Ken

MERE BASH 2012



Ian Anslow orders the weather for the annual Avon piss-up (Photos: Rob Kingston)

"Roll-up, Roll-up... it is the 2012 Mere Bash!" I hollered to all and sundry and then promptly got down on my knees and prayed to the weather gods. Why I hear you ask? Well with the help of the committee, I was the dude who would have been responsible if it had not worked....but with the help of lots and lots of people we had a fantastic Bash.

Camping started on the Friday and we had a fire pit with loads and loads of wood. The main fun started on Saturday with the weather playing ball for a change. A jumping castle for the kids saw some serious usage and the Mere Bowl being flyable for most of the Saturday with lots of paragliders in the air. The barbecues were fired up in the evening and the kegs of beer tapped - enticing all the flyers to land.

Two members of Leatherat kicked the music festivities off, with a great set, creating intrigue, the audience joined in with the singing. 'Also Eden' was up next, loud and proud, they belted out the tunes even getting quite a few on the dance floor to shake a leg. The beer, music and festivities flowed on until late into the star filled evening, what a great Saturday!

Sunday started with a few heavy heads crawling out of there beds, tents and campervans. Some were eager, walking up the Rifle range and found themselves in the air early. This motivated the rest of the camp to follow

but with strengthening winds forecast it became blown out by the afternoon.

With loads of flying done on both days, good music, food and beer the 2012 Mere Bash was awesome.

A big thank you to all the helpers and everyone that attended you made it special.



CAPTION COMPETITION



This month, notorious deviant Jon Rose submits to Master Tim's advances. Any captions should be sent to editor@avonhpgg.co.uk

VIDEO PICKS

The editor selects some of the highlights from ParaTube in the last 6 months

LIGHT LINE:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjxkXNC31Z4>

Jean Baptiste Le Chandelier shows that coastal flying can be baddass too in this beautifully shot follow-up to that Urban Side clip.





50TH BIRTHDAY MICROLIGHT FLIGHT - GOWER PENINSULA, WALES

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12Xt-zlFB8M>

Some lucky guy got given a flight over the Gower for his birthday ... this video is absolutely cracking and includes lots of great views over South Wales as well as low-flying shots over the peninsula.

FINALS



Declan reminisces about the autumn that kept on giving

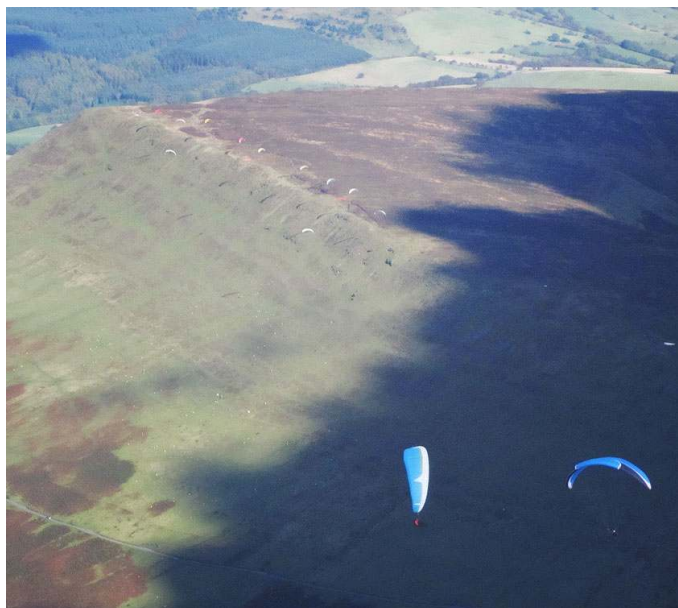
After a promising start to the season that saw me double my previous best XC total before the end of May the summer was a total washout. I even returned cap in hand from a week in the Zillertal with less than 30 mins airtime. If there was one thing the autumn and early winter taught me this year it's that you should never write the season off. If the airmass is unstable enough, it can still throw you some gold. Some of the best days of the year were still up for grabs. October started with a classic Pandy day with many completing the full ridge run. It was thermic but definitely weak.

It seemed like the sun was packing it in for the season. I didn't even pack my GPS before heading to Hay Bluff on the 14th October thinking I was in for a top-to-

bottom. The day wasn't looking much better when Rob Kingston showed me how to lock both his main and his spare car keys in the boot. The day proved to be one of the all-time pleasant surprises. Whilst the day started scratchy, thermals quickly began to build and a large gaggle were at base within 5 mins of taking off. Ken and a number of others were eager for a taste of Lord Hereford's Knob but Ben had got out of sync and was low over launch. Not wanting to leave any man behind,

I returned for him and we later jumped the gap together, me chortling as Ben got increasingly frustrated by Ken effectively repeating "is this thing on?" into his radio for 5 minutes. On the main Talgarth ridge, the new objective became "stay dry" as a large shower began drifting down towards the Cat's Back. Some of the other pilots were flinging themselves

around the corner to investigate the milk run whilst a chap on a Delta flung himself SAT-style at a number of sailplanes climbing up beneath him in the thermal he'd tricked them into joining.



Rob and Ben climbing over Lord Hereford's Knob in front of the melee back at launch where people were complaining there "wasn't enough space"!

With the sky looking uninviting over the back, I was tempted by Ben and Rob into pushing out to the main road to find a cafe to warm up in. I lost Ben and met up with Rob over the main road. Having spotted a suitable field to land in, I asked where Ben had got to "I'm back at launch" came the reply ... *thanks mate!* The headwind I'd fought to get there was now in my favour though and I managed to find some lift to drift with back to the Talgarth ridge which got me safely back to the Bluff and a lift from Joe Dart to Hay where we had a well deserved roast and a few pints whilst waiting for a spare key to Rob's car. Rob took one for the team that afternoon, waiting back on the hill which was really appreciated by all. He was rewarded with 38 points-worth of FAI goodness that day ... and I didn't even pack my GPS!

The season had one more treat in store though in the form of a trip to base in sea thermals in the middle of November. Avon turned up in force at Bossington to see the season out in style (*below*).

