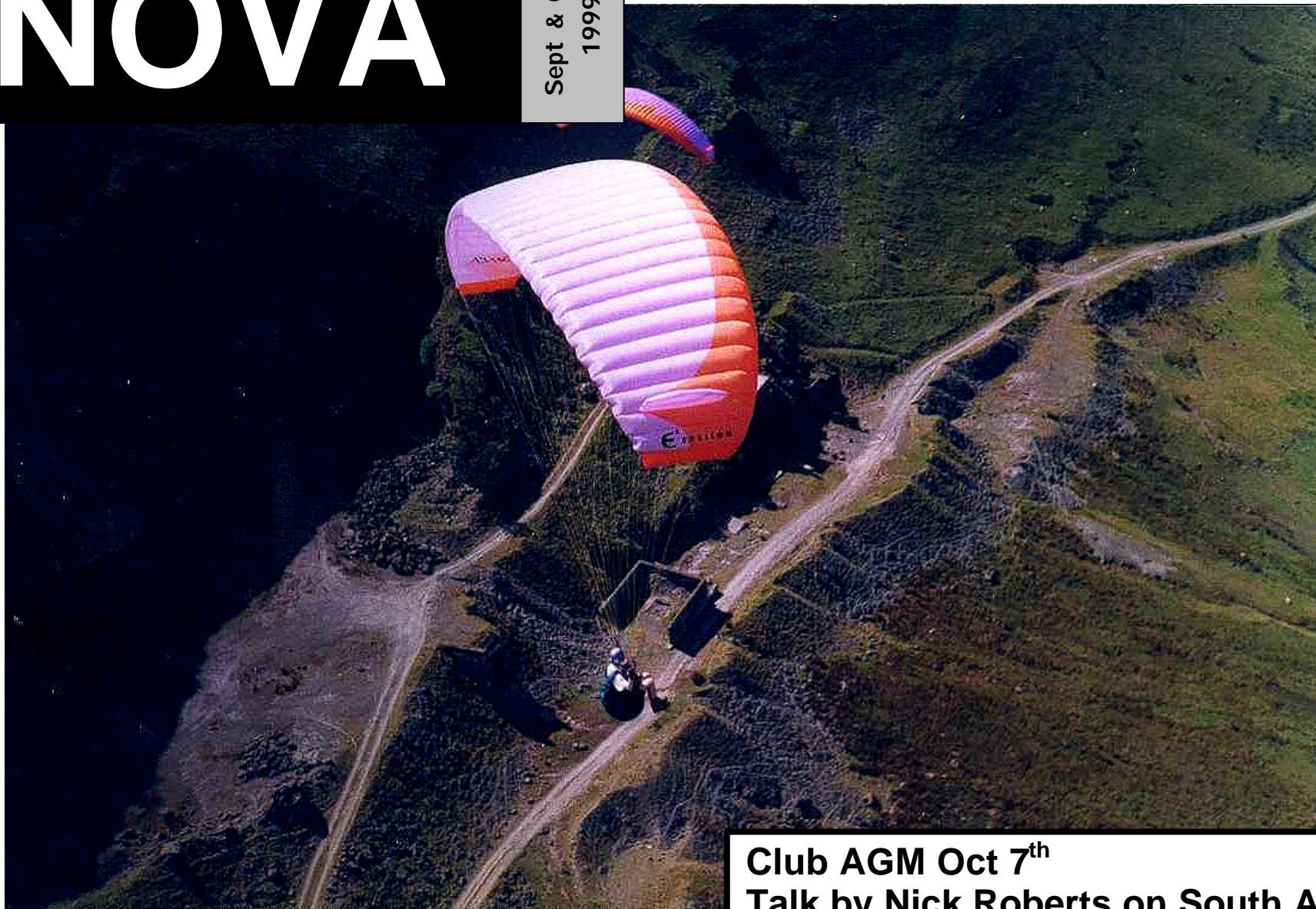


NOVA

Sept & Oct
1999



**Club AGM Oct 7th
Talk by Nick Roberts on South Africa
Xmas Meal Dec 2nd Book Now**

The Committee

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Information

For Club Coaches Information See The New Updated List Near The Back Of This Magazine.

Sites

Lulsgate 01275 474441

Weather

Wendy Windblows Call Rod Buck to Subscribe 0114 253 0372
 Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset 0891 500405
 Glamorgan 0891 500409
 Dyfed and Powys 0891 500414
 Airmet South 0891 500693

Send XC Flights to Tim Pentreath (PG)
 Neil Atkinson (HG)

Avon HG & PG Club Diary

Date	Event	Venue	Contact
07/10/99	Club Meeting – AGM!!!	The Compass Inn	
04/11/99	Club Meeting - There I Was Evening	The Compass Inn	Rich Harding
02/12/99	Xmas Meal and Presentations	The Compass Inn	Tim Pentreath

Mid-Week Flying Phone 0800 515544

AVON



Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

NOVA

The Avon
Hang-gliding & Paragliding
Club Newsletter

September
&
October
1999

NOVA is the newsletter of the Avon Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, or Committee of the Club.

All contributions should be sent to the Editor of NOVA. NOVA can also be found online at www.skytribe.force9.co.uk



Editors Bit



Hi welcome to the latest issue of NOVA. This is the last issue before the Club AGM, I hope you all take the chance to come along and get involved. This is your club and we need to know how you want it run for you. There will be food during the break and then a talk from Nationals pilot Nick Roberts. You may remember from Tony's article earlier this year that Nick was in South Africa, and he flew over 1000km in 10 days. Nick will be talking about this trip. This is a good opportunity to let you know about the Xmas meal, which will be on Dec. 2nd at the Compass. The cost is £18 each with a menu

selection see elsewhere in the mag. The meal will see the presentation of the club trophies, entertainment in the form of a band will also be laid on.

Well it seems like the weather has finally broken, just as we try to fly the finals of the Club Challenge, but it looks like there maybe a window this weekend, so fingers crossed by the time you read this we may have flown it. The guys at the top of the club league are battling it out to the end, with some great flights recently, check the latest results in this issue.

Again I've had a good number of articles, mainly from the regulars, but my reserves are definitely getting low, so please get writing and send me those tales of your flying adventures. I especially need hang-gliding articles, rumours abound that some paraglider pilots have taken up hang-gliding just so they can write an article. The Devon and Somerset Condors Editor got so pissed off with the lack of articles he has stopped the mag, you have been warned.

Finally don't forget you can keep up to date with the latest news from the club on our web sites, link in at www.skytribe.force9.co.uk.

Till next time have some great flying and don't forget when you do, send me that article...

Marcus

Get High, Stay High, Fly Far

Send your articles to

Marcus King

159 The High Street, Batheaston, Bath. BA1 7DW

Email: marcus@skytribe.force9.co.uk

Fax me on 0870 7062551

Phone me on 01225 852912

CHAIR TALK



Next month is the club's annual general meeting (1st Thursday of October), it could be your chance to become involved in the decision making, along with the managing of the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club. All committee positions are up for grabs, if you are unable to attend the A.G.M but would like to be considered for a place in the committee then please let me know as soon as possible. If you get elected you wont be asked to drive miles each month to attend committee meetings, we have around 3 or 4 per year. The days of monthly committee meetings have long gone thanks to the Internet, communication has been improved and more gets done. If you would like to get more involved and have some spare time to donate let us know.

During the last few years the club has grown, we are up 7% for this year with 278 members. The committee have maintained security of our flying sites (and maybe a few more), organised many sociable and flying events that have been great fun

for those that have made it, managed club funds for the protection and future existence of our club and free flying, all of which has given benefit to Avon members. None of this can happen by it's self, it has only been possible because of our committee. We have been lucky to have one of the most enthusiastic committees known to me in a long, long time. A glance into my Avon Club Email folder is an indication of the amount of time that is given by our committee, I will take this opportunity to thank them, without such pilots free flying would quickly fade away, we have a lot to thank them for.

So come along to the A.G.M and show your support, it promises to be a great evening. Guest speaker is Nick Roberts with slides of flying in South Africa (not to be missed), sandwiches will be served during the break, hoo-rah. Don't forget to book your party tickets early for the Christmas Bash (1st Thursday in December), hurry there is a max of 80 seats available. Contact our Club Secretary Tim (the peashooter kid) Pentreath or Colin Lark for further information.

Brent Pullen has volunteered to take on the role of Events Organiser, he will need your support. Who do you know that's interesting, entertaining, and willing (gun against the head acceptable) to be our special guest on club night. Give Brent a call (01373825737) if you know of someone or have any other ideas that we could use.

Help take Hang Gliding and Paragliding into the new millennium, carving our image and protecting our future for the 21st century, your Club needs YOU!

Colin Lark

...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Letters...Lette

Harness Safety

I've recently come across a flaw with a particular model of quick clip type harness buckle. Under a certain load and motion the buckle will release at way below its safe design load. Here is how to test your buckle. Make sure the buckle is properly clipped together and the catches are properly engaged. Grasp the webbing either side of the buckle tightly

and close to the buckle, one hand either side and clear of the release clips. Apply as much tension as you can to pull the buckles apart. About 5 to 20 kg. Whilst maintaining tension apply a shear motion to slide the female part of the buckle from side to side within the male part. If you do this correctly and the buckle is faulty it will fail at around 5 to 15 kg tension.

There is a bit of a technique required to do this and many people cannot do the correct movement first time. Once people have seen it done they can usually repeat it. The difficult bit is maintaining tension throughout the shear motion.

I first saw this problem a year ago on a harness where the chest strap kept flying undone. The harness had the same type of buckles on all three straps and two displayed this flaw under test. I submitted an incident report and the importer contacted all owners and the buckles were replaced with a different type. Unfortunately another one of these harnesses appeared in our shop a week ago for a reserve repack still with the original buckles showing the same flaw. I sent in another incident report and contacted the FSC yesterday but also discovered an almost identical buckle showing the same flaw on the leg straps of two other new harnesses.

The buckles in question are typical quick clip type and look much the same as any other. They consist of a spade type female connector and a rectangular male section with two push in spring loaded clips on either side. The two types I've seen which display this flaw have been either silver alloy or blue/purple anodised with no manufacturers name on them. One type had no markings at all and the other simply had 15KN stamped on it. There is an almost identical buckle which appears to be OK but it has a series of dots stamped into the spring clips and hollow rivets whereas the ones with the flaw do not.

In summary the ones to check have no dots on the spring clip, either no markings or 15KN stamped on them and the rivet heads are solid and not hollow. However these are the only two types I personally have seen with a problem. There might be others.

The ones I've just seen on the new harnesses are only being used on the leg straps and the good type with dotted clips for the chest strap. It is doubtful whether the leg straps would come under the movement which releases the buckle in normal flight however I personally would not be happy with having buckles rated at 15kn which will release at less than 20kg under certain circumstances. The pilot who owned the new harness and the Instructors in the shop who sold it to him were all horrified at how easily the leg straps could come undone. Having said that not all the Instructors watching could repeat the motion which fails the buckle. Mainly I think because you have to be fairly strong to apply 15kg tension with your arms straight.

Ian Blackmore. (Airworks)

Thanks

I would like to thank all those who gave up flying time to help me at Ubley on 10 July after my prang, by sorting out my car, glider, gear and me. With the help of a large piece of metal my arm is now well on the way to mending. Again, many thanks.

Richard Danbury

Which Club?

After last weeks meeting I've been thinking about the situation between Avon and Thames Valley, and would like to make my own observations and suggestions.

The crux of the matter comes down to the use of Olivers Castle by a few Avon Pilots. I feel this should be put into context with the overall pros and cons that both clubs have to offer.

Avon has 10 sites at present (11 if we manage to get back Crook Peak). Thames has 7 sites.

Avon's sites are open 365 days a year with no restrictions, except for Ubley with a maximum of 6 gliders.

Thames can't use Coombe Gibbet for 6 months of the year.

Liddington is restricted when there are young animals being reared.

Milk Hill costs £1 (even for their own members!) per car, with only 5 cars allowed to park at the top.

Oare has to be pre-booked and with only 4 pilots per day.

Sugar only allows 5 pilots in the air at any one time, and costs £2 per person - even for Thames members!

Tan Hill is closed when there are any Lambs on the site, and only allows 20 gliders per day.

Olivers Castle is a SSSI, and despite being registered with the BHPA, they do not have the Landowners permission to use his site. Their own sites guide states 'Not official. Be extremely conciliatory when challenged. This is a SSSI and you weren't meant to be flying unless you could go XC!'

Also Oare and Olivers are Pilot rating only.

When you put all of these facts together it isn't hard to see why Tracy and I decided not to renew our membership for TVHGC this year. Not only would it now cost us £50 as they have discontinued associate membership, but looking at it realistically, their sites are all crowded, small or unflyable. And I'm sorry, but call me 'Mr Picky' when it comes to Olivers Castle, but registering it with the BHPA means nothing. Trespassing on the owners land without his permission is little short of criminal

behaviour, condoned by the Club and endorsed in its Sites Guide. If that were the case I think I'll register the Millenium Dome as a site! Just think - 360 degree take offs with a built in thermal generator. Who cares if someone else owns it, just tell them the TVHGC says it's OK.

But seriously, I think the Avon club is in a superb bargaining position here, and full advantage should be taken of it. If the TVHGC wants to use Westbury etc., then put this proposal to them:-

" The Avon and TVHGC should waive all fees with respect to each others sites and members. Associate membership is no longer required from either Club " This could only foster good relationships between the clubs, and stop all the bickering about 'who hasn't got a helmet sticker', or 'he's not from our club', etc, etc.

Finally, there's also another reason Tracy and I have remained in the Avon club (and probably in Paragliding as a sport) as opposed to any other. The people we have met, the friendship extended to us on every occasion, the advice given to us 'Red Streamers!' and the sense of being part of a happy bunch of flyers rather than just members of a club has been fantastic. The Avon club has much to be proud of - lovely sites in ideal locations, but most of all the quality of its members.

Cheers

Sandy & Tracy

Paragliding - an obsession?

Or putting paragliding on the back-burner...

Sent to the EuroPG mailing list on 9th September 1999

It's taken me a long time to realise it, but over this summer I have been increasingly aware that flying has become too dominant in my life, to the extent that I feel it is almost unhealthy (well maybe that's putting it a bit strong!) But it certainly leads to huge frustrations and difficulties, so I've come to the conclusion that I have to restore the balance in my life that has been missing for a few years now.

Only getting 15 mins flying in the five days I spent in Grand Bornand (before I gave up), when I could have been on a beach in Brittany with my family say, didn't help...

As doesn't staring out of the office window on all those classic mid-week flying days...

Then there are all those weekends when I can't decide which day to go flying on - I invariably seem to choose the wrong day, and get immensely frustrated when I hear what the day I missed was like...

Not to mention getting really excited upon seeing the long-range forecast on Wednesday, only to have one's hopes dashed on Friday...

Meanwhile all this umming and arring and not being able to make family plans for the weekend makes life extremely difficult for Lisa, my very long suffering wife...

There was the day back in April when four of us sat on a hill in Wales all day in blazing sunshine, but with not a breath of wind at all. I just sat there thinking I should be doing something with the family...

Then again there are the days I can't make it - Paramania this year for example - when I had a great camping/partying/swimming weekend at a friend's 40th party, but nagging away at the back of my mind is the thought that I'm missing out on some epic flying down in Wales, even though it turns out that I probably didn't. Same story with the recent Bloreng party - I was on holiday in Jersey having a wonderful time, but all the time I'm wondering what I was missing...

I'm sure you can all rattle off a similar stories, but when you've got young children (2 & 4) who will only be young once, it makes it so much harder... The trouble is I find the sport so addictive - when it's good it's absolutely fantastic - that's what keeps you going through the frustrations, but as I've found out it can get too obsessive. And so at this stage in my life I have to redress the balance.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not on a downer - flying has given me some wonderful experiences (too many to mention) and many good friends which/who will remain with me for ever, and for which I feel incredibly privileged. To have the gift of free-flight is surely a magical thing.

And I'm not giving up flying either, I'm just putting it on the back burner for a while, downsizing you could say.

For those keen Avon XC pilots who send me flight details on such a regular basis, don't worry, I'm going to keep the website (www.avonpgxc.freeserve.co.uk) and my Nova contributions going, but the difference is that I won't get jealous of all your flights! As for my position as Avon Membership Secretary, well maybe I'll try to find someone to hand that over to at the AGM next month!

Good flying all

Tim Pentreath

Email survey results

Recently Tim Pentreath undertook an email survey of the members of the club. I have printed it here so that those members not on email can join in the debate. Please feel free to send in your ideas, it's your club, we want to know how you want it to be run. Thanks to all of you who responded to my email survey about Nova. Those of you without email won't

have a clue about what I'm talking about, so here are the questions again. You'll see the tone was tongue in cheek, but still with a serious side to it, with the main objective being to see if people would be prepared to receive Nova electronically.

The Survey

- 1 Are you a hang-glider or paraglider pilot?
- 2 Do you actually read NOVA?
- 3 If YES to previous question, how / where do you read it?
 - a from front to back in one go over breakfast the morning it arrives
 - b from front to back in one go as soon as you get to work
 - c sneak off to the downstairs loo to read it in peace and quiet away from the wife / husband / partner / children etc.
 - d chuck it in your briefcase and flick through it over a couple of days
 - e chuck it on top of the pile of old mags / mail order catalogues in the downstairs loo to read sometime in the future
 - f none of your business
- 4 Are you a sad git like me and hoard back issues of Nova, or do you bin them once you've read them?
- 5 What do you think of the content?

Info	NOT ENOUGH / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO MUCH
Editorial	TOO SHORT / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO LONG
News	TOO SHORT / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO LONG
PG articles	NOT ENOUGH / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO MANY
HG articles	NOT ENOUGH / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO MANY
Adverts	NOT ENOUGH / ABOUT RIGHT / TOO MANY

Any other comments? Anything else you'd like to see in it?
- 6 Overall opinion?
 - a I rip it up and use it as bog paper
 - b I read election leaflets from the Liberal Democrats first
 - c Pretty good considering it's put together by a paraglider pilot
 - d If my copy of FHM arrives on the same day I always read NOVA first
 - e If I don't get it at the beginning of each month I get suicidal
- 7 Would you be happy to receive Nova in electronic format, provided it isn't a huge download of course?
- 8 If YES to previous question, what would be your preferred format for downloading
 - a Microsoft Word 97
 - b Microsoft Word 6
 - c Adobe Acrobat (to read Acrobat files, you need Acrobat Reader, which is free and widely available on the web and CDs etc)
 - d Plain text (ie. no formatting or pictures)
 - e Something else - please specify

The Results

The first notable thing about the results was the high level of response - of the 100 or so surveys sent, I received 46 replies (26% HG, 59% PG, 15% Both - which broadly represents the make up of members in the club). And everyone actually reads Nova, so we must be doing something right!

Q3. Nova is generally eagerly awaited with over 50% of responders reading it on the day it arrives, and 93% reading it within a couple of days.

Q4. It's official, HG pilots are sadder than PG pilots! 64% of HG pilots are sad gits and hoard their old copies of Nova, compared to only 50% of PG pilots. But beware if you fly both - you've got an 86% chance of being a sad git! (NB. These results are not statistically significant!) Overall though 59% of responders keep their old copies of Nova, which again means we must be doing something right!

Q5. Regarding the content of Nova here goes:

General info - 21% thought there was too little,

79% thought it was about right

Editorial - 10% too little, 88% about right,

2% too much

News - 24% too little, 76% about right

PG articles - amongst HG pilots, 60% said

about right, 40% too many

- amongst PG pilots, 20% said too few,

80% about right

HG articles - amongst HG pilots, 80% said

too few, 20% about right

- amongst PG pilots, 40% said too few,

56% about right and 4% too many

Adverts - 24% too few, 74% about right,

2% too many

So overall most people think it's about right, however there is clearly a desire for more articles in certain areas: notably HG, but also news, adverts and general info. On the HG issue, Nova probably reflects the make up of the club (31% HG, 12% Both, 57% PG) so I guess it's not surprising really, but if HG pilots want more HG articles, then you'll have to contribute more!

There were some excellent and some humorous ideas for new articles - ranging from "more ParAvion ads", "more Airtopia ads" and "lots of naked ladies (preferably paragliding)" to "xc flying skills", "UK competition structure", "product reviews" and "low

air timers info" and many more - I'll include the full list at the end.

Q6. Not surprisingly the majority of people (83%) thought that it was "pretty good considering it was put together by a paraglider pilot". Of the rest, 4 people would read Nova in preference to their copy of FHM if it arrived on the same day, and one person admits to getting suicidal if their copy doesn't arrive each month (or couple of months) - Rich, you really are sad! And as for a certain pilot who flies an Eastern European intermediate glider (not a MAC), who admitted to "ripping it up and using it as bog paper", well, what can I say - you're expelled from the club immediately! ;^) I'm pleased to see no one would read a Lib Dem election leaflet first though!

There were some amusing and encouraging comments too:

"It's rather good"

"Good work, well done"

"It's a bit thick (like some PG pilots) - same size as DSC mag is sufficient"

"It's pretty good stuff, certainly better than TVHGC mag. Wessex I find a bit rambling. Condors mag is pretty good as well. Keep up the good work"

"Pretty good all round. I can't complain as I've never contributed"

"The work put into it is much appreciated"

"Yes sir I think it's just fab - I just love that Nova mag!. I would be happy to receive it in any format and pay big money to get my hands on a copy. Yes I do collect them, and yes I am a sad git. The only thing wrong with it is there are not enough Airtopia adverts"

"Not as good as XC mag yet, but better than Volplane - but don't quote me"

"Great mag - keep up the good work. I'll try to find the time to write something for it one day"

"Nova Flying Diary is excellent, so too is the quality of the website (in general)"

"Actually, it's excellent - let's have more of it"

Q7. Now on to the real purpose of the survey - 38 (83%) people said they would be happy to receive nova via email or the internet, and I'm sure there's probably more who didn't reply at all. But if we say 40 people, that represents a saving of about =A3170 per year which although it isn't a huge amount, it is a step in the right direction.

Q8. Regarding the format of the file, 15 people said they would be happy with Microsoft Word 97, whilst 21 people said Adobe Acrobat, and the rest (6) said as HTML (ie. as a website) or as plain text. Regarding the actual distribution of it there are two options - 1) email the file as an attachment, or 2) download from the Avon website. Unfortunately I forgot to ask this question, so I will have to follow this up in due course! So clearly there is a demand for electronic distribution - it's now up to Marcus and me to move it forward.

Finally, here's the full list of articles that people requested to see in Nova - if you feel suitably qualified to contribute, then PLEASE DO SO!

- ?? Articles about flying skills
- ?? How about a series of articles about how to build up to going XC in our area - like good first XCs to try
- ?? More articles on trips/good sites overseas
- ?? More descriptions of good flights - who did what
- ?? More humour - a new version of Auntie Ray's advice page
- ?? Sites guide updates
- ?? Details on club members own gliders, their views, happenings, costs, maintenance, flyability etc., also other flying kit : varios, GPS, reserve's, helmets, radios, harness, boots, camera, shades, haircuts etc., from the horses mouth and not the manufacturer.
- ?? List of available club books and tapes.
- ?? Contact news from other adjoining clubs - site issues, associate membership details.
- ?? List of qualified first aiders within the club.
- ?? A reminder of the basic air laws we must all remember, with perhaps a small comment explaining each main item
- ?? In my humble opinion, I think the club sites guide needs up-dating with more modern maps, info, site pictures of take-off, bottom landing, parking, details on facilities, emergency procedures, do's and dont's, agreements with landowners/farmers
- ?? How to be a beginner paraglider/hang glider pilot after school
- ?? Articles on radios ie. types and frequencies used by Avon pilots
- ?? I'd like to see more information geared to the new club member and the less experienced pilots. For instance, flying abroad - what are the dangers/benefits/problems; which airlines will

carry a hang glider? Which European sites are best for ridge soaring practice/thermalling practice/wave experience?

- ?? How about more info on towing - pro's/cons - what clubs offer what facilities? Is it difficult/dangerous/expensive?
- ?? An overview/summary of how the various levels of competitions work would be useful as well - for example, what's the difference between The British Open and The Nationals? The answer is blindingly obvious to all you old hands, but to a 'new boy', they're a baffling mystery!
- ?? How about some incentive scheme to encourage the novices? (Many congratulations on events like X-Country Virgins Weekend - let's have some more!) - perhaps an Avon Novices League, open to 'red ribboners' only. There was a letter in last month's Nova, I think, about the difficulties experienced by low-airtime pilots getting the advice and benefit of the knowledge of the more experienced pilots and I read the reply with great interest. Although it was sympathetic and practical, I'm not sure it actually solved the problem!
- ?? Could more distinction be made between event reports/articles on hang gliding and paragliding? As a novice pilot, unaware that a particular competition is paragliding-only, for example, I sometimes have got half way through the article before finding out whether it's hang gliding or paragliding that's being reported. Not that I wouldn't read a paragliding article, I just want to know what exactly it is I'm reading about from the start!
- ?? And how come the "For Sale" section is so under-used? Are you charging an exorbitant sales fee?? I've often looked there for smaller items like varios, windspeed guages, flying suits, but there only ever seems to be 3 or 4 gliders/wings for sale and nothing else. I wonder why that is - I'd have thought it was the ideal forum for 2nd hand bits 'n' pieces.


And a final word: <preacher mode on> the more you put in (to Nova and to the club), the more you'll get out <preacher mode off>

Thanks to everyone who responded.

Tim Pentreath

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 Conwy. LL31 9UY
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*Clouds over Bath
 (Photo Tim Pentreath, from the ground!)*

MERE BASH REPORT

I am delighted to say that this years annual Avon Flyin event was once again a great success. Yes, despite several last minute spanners being thrown in the works, it eventually came out largely unscathed. The most galling of all was our late change of date, which was forced upon us by the late announcement of the Airwave Challenge Finals on the same weekend. Yours truly being the Paragliding team organiser, felt that I could not do both at the same time, it's hard enough coping with one thing at a time!!!! The reason that it was so annoying was that no sooner had we moved the date of the Bash, then Dave Fenwick decided to move the date of the Finals, therefore removing the problem, but alas too late. My apologies to everyone who couldn't make it due to short notice. I shall be making every effort not to let this happen again.

The flying got underway on the Friday evening, when Colin took his Doodle Bug for a spin around the Rifle

Range, this caused momentary concern to Rich our esteemed Sites Officer, but he was soon mollified with the offer of a beer and the opportunity to watch Colin's face as Geoff Rogers tried it out. Large plastic clothes peg in his mouth, he went haring off down the field and seemed to take an age to get airborne. Colin by this time really looked like he wanted to breath again, and did so briefly, until Geoff disappeared from sight over the ridge, the look of concern reappeared on our Chairman's face, and did not disappear till Geoff was safely back on terra firma.

The rest of the evening was spent doing some last minute preparations, and some considerable amount of drinking. I was finally beginning to relax, knowing that it was all in place and my biggest worry now was



whether the beer would run out, this was not a great concern of mine, because I knew that if it did, I would be too drunk to care by that time.

Saturday morning saw people starting to arrive in greater numbers and a variety of tents and caravans

(they must be Hang Glider Pilots I heard someone say) were beginning to fill the field. After several phone calls to the hire company even the toilets eventually arrived, quickly followed by a big queue. The weather was gloriously sunny of course, but the wind was ENE and it was looking like Geoff was going to have a busy day on the winch, which by 11.00 was set up and operating on top of the hill in the field to the east of the top landing. There was much lamenting the absence of last years light SE and it was quite a surprise when people started to fly the spur on the west of the bowl. When Dave Coward started to harvest his remaining crop, the sight of a big green

thermal trigger slowly chomping it's way round the field saw several other pilots going up the hill to try their luck. By early afternoon the Thames Valley Duels started to work their way through the many people who were hoping for a tandem flight, conditions were not ideal, it being a little bit bumpy and the flyable part of the ridge being fairly small, but I was pleased to see a constant stream of people lobbing off for a flight. The T.V. Duels soon had a 4X4 ferrying people up the hill, the farmer was taking children for rides in the combined harvester, and the bouncy castle was proving once again to be a star attraction for the little people.

Ben Ashman's arrival caused a bit of a stir, when he first landed his Microlight on top of the hill before taking off again for a couple of circuits round the

bowl followed by a perfectly executed landing on the track beside the marquee, he had flown all the way from Northampton to come to our party. I was at first a little concerned as to Rich's reaction to this intrusion of powered flight into our domain, however he took it all in his stride and was also quite impressed by the accuracy of Ben's landing. I managed to fly briefly, but with the BBQ and Bar to sort out quickly landed and started looking for volunteers. But not before joining the kite flyers for a bit of duelling. Brent took charge of getting the BBQ underway and after an initial delay in getting a good fire going soon got this under control, which was a good thing as the Bar had been open for some time and there were lots of hungry pilots around. Unbelievably though there were still people flying at 8.30, Mark Taggart on the Dual being one of the last to land.

Meanwhile in the tent the Band got under way, as did the Bar Staff, with a great display of synchronised air guitar and you guessed it, before long several people had to try their luck climbing the pole. All in all the Party carried on like this for the rest of the evening, we did manage to drink most of the beer (which I'm glad to say didn't dry up) and we even managed to eat at least half the food (which proved to be far more popular than last years BBQ). I think most people went to bed partly drunk and partly knackered after a good nights partying and an enjoyable days flying.

Sunday morning saw the usual hangovers and a rather slow start, the weather was not so kind to us so there was no urgency to rush up the hill. Breakfast was followed by a session spent clearing up some of last nights wreckage, and the divvying up of left over BBQ goodies, in fact breakfast consisted of left over BBQ for many !!! A few bold pilots took to the hill and Geoff cranked the winch up, but it didn't last for long

as the wind was getting up and the turbulence followed suit. Slowly people started to depart, but before the last one left there was one more thing in store, as Paul drove down from the hill towing the winch and a cloud of thick smoke behind him. After some investigation it was discovered that several welds had broken and a tyre was rubbing on the mudguard, having removed the mudguard, the tyre

was then rubbing on the cable drum. It was quite apparent that the winch wasn't going anywhere in that condition and a short pause ensued whilst a solution was sought. After much scratching of heads we found it and managed to get two scaffolding planks wedged in on top of the axle, this worked but left us with another problem. The

scaffolding planks were needed to get the Quad Bike into the pickup, ahh well !!! Nothing to it really, we had to lift the bike into the back of the pickup, fortunately this was easier than anticipated and Paul was able to continue home, with a brief stop to drop the winch off with a friendly welder in Wincanton.

I would like to finish by thanking everyone who came along and supported the event, and especially everyone who helped in the organisation and running of the weekend. I could never have done it without this help. I hope to see you all, and many more next year for the Millennium Bash 2000. What a good excuse for an even bigger and better PARTY!!!!

Simon.



NEWS etc...

SITE NEWS

Crook Peak

As you may be aware, an Avon member was extremely fortunate to escape death below Crook Peak on Saturday, 7th August, when he overflowed the bottom landing field and crashed into the high voltage power lines on the other side of the river. As mentioned in a previous message here, we were aware that the Estate was on the verge of removing the current tenant of the bottom landing field, with whom we have a good relationship; unfortunately, the new tenant will be the lady who farms the field containing the power lines concerned, who is now very anti free flying.

The National Trust, who control the Peak itself, are being very supportive of our right to fly but the absence of a bottom landing option (and difficulty of top and side landing) means that, until further notice, Crook Peak must be restricted to experienced pilots only. For the purposes of this message I consider 'experienced' pilots to be those with in excess of 100 hours airtime - it is difficult to land on the side of Crook Peak without damaging your equipment or yourself. I would also request that no pilot flies the hill unless they already have experience there. Needless to say, do not launch unless you are as certain as you can be of staying up. John Fielder continues to pursue the various parties in an attempt to resolve the situation in a manner favourable to ourselves and the Condors, with whom we share the site.

I realise that the above may seem a little strict but please bear in mind that the accident would not have happened had the pilot concerned (who was wearing a red ribbon) heeded the site rules which state that 'Pilots with less than ten hours flying are recommended not to fly in anything other than a SSW/SW wind'. The wind was 90 degrees off to the SE.

The above is mainly directed at Paraglider pilots - I do not imagine a resurgence of Hang Gliding interest in Crook Peak in the immediate future (!) but, for those of you who do fly it, please do not go down!

Thank You,

Rich Harding, Avon Sites Officer.

Other News

Tim Brunskill leaves UK for summer in NZ

On 1st October Tim B flies out to NZ to spend six months with Elly in Christchurch, NZ, before they both return to the UK next April. Tim and Elly can be contacted by email at elly.tim@inet.net.nz. Have a great time both of you, and no, we're not jealous at all!

Accidents

Roger Holmes (PG) hits HT cables at Crook Peak, see Geoff's report elsewhere in the mag.

Neil Atkinson (HG) involved in mid-air with PG on the Monday of the Bloreng Party w/e. Neil luckily only sustained reasonably minor injuries, and made it to the recent committee meeting. The PG Pilot has regained consciousness and his most major injury is a broken leg.

We believe Rob Crane had an accident whilst flying his HG in Spain, apparently he clipped a tree and nosedived into the ground, injuring both knees. He is now back in the country, recovering at his parents.

A new arrival

Congratulations to Avon members Martin and Amy Stanton on the birth of their first child, a baby girl, earlier this summer.

Membership News

Club membership stats

We currently have 278 members - 1 life member, 203 full, 9 family, 55 associates and 10 committee members. 54% fly PG exclusively, 34% HG, and 12% both. 36 members lapsed last year, but so far they have been replaced by 55 new members, representing a growth of 7% over last year.

Member Get Member Scheme

So far only two non-committee members have recruited new members under the MGM scheme - Philip Jolly and Simon Wood. Well done both of you - you can look forward to receiving £2 off next year's renewal fee for each new member. If anyone needs some more MGM forms please let me know (they are the small A5 forms, with a space for the referring pilot's name at the top).

Volunteer needed!

As some of you may know already I want to concentrate on activities that involve my family more next year, and having done a two year stint as Membership Secretary I would like to step down. So the job is up for grabs if you want it!

From my experience you must have access to a PC/Mac with Excel 97/98 and Word 97/98 installed, and have good skills in both those programs to manage the database and produce mailings. In addition you will need access to a laser printer and franking machine (ideally), and must have email. Expect to spend 2-3 hours a week on it during the

busy times (renewals) and less than an hour a week at other times.

I will obviously help the new person get up to speed with the database and mail merge templates as they stand, but of course you may have your own ideas as to how it should be set up.

It is an important role within the club, and your work will be appreciated by us all, so don't be backward in coming forward at the AGM!

Thanks

Tim



*Rich Harding, Alex Coltman and another glider thermalling together over the Black Mountains
(Photo Rich Harding)*

Paragliding XC League

Sponsored by System X, MAC UK (ParaExcellence) and Sky Systems

Latest XC News from Tim

Apologies if your flight isn't mentioned below - see the XC database for details of all flights...

Wednesday 15th September

Rich and Alex head to Merthyr to fly 43.9km and 22.2km respectively under a fairly weak sky - Alex's words were *"very slow, hard, but great fun flight"*... Meanwhile Jim heads to Oliver's again and after a "short" flight to ParAvion, takes off again at 1630 and flies 30.0km to Coombe Gibbet - unbelievable!

With these flights entered there's only 9km separating the top three pilots - Alex on 213km, Jim on 211km and Tom on 204km - with a over a month to go there's still plenty to fly for!

Monday 13th September

Jim flies a storm from Oliver's - 47.9km - base was at 5200' from where Jim could see Wales, the Solent and Didcot at the same time - it sounds wonderful!

Sunday 12th September

Dave Yeandle seems to be the only one to get away from Westbury with a 8.4km flight. It looked like a nice day - I was recovering from a hangover after a good party at a friend's wedding! Actually I've done some serious thinking about my flying and where I'm going with it - as a consequence I'm now much more relaxed about missing those epic days. I'm not giving up, but just don't expect me out quite so often! Read my letter to EuroPG about it in this mag.

Monday 30th August - Sunday 5th September

A triplet of flights from Rich adds another 26km to his total - that's now 16 flights entered in the league this year Mr XC!

Sunday 29th August

Jim Mallinson has a better flight (27.9km) from Golden Ball (nr. Milk Hill) than he had during 3 weeks of flying out in the Alps!

Saturday 28th August

Andy Summerskill makes his first appearance into the league with a 23.2km flight from Merthyr during the Blore party weekend.

Tuesday 15th - Sunday 22nd August

British Open PG comp in Grand Bornand - numerous Avon members are there, and we all have a completely crap time as the weather is a complete pile of pants! Marcus, Tim B and I all cut our losses and return home in time for the Mere Bash which in true fashion is great fun and boasted flying on both days at the Rifle Range. I had 2-3 hours flying at Mere compared to 15 mins in France! See elsewhere in this mag for a full report from both Grand Bornand. On the Saturday of the Mere Bash Pete Taylor flies a bit of a tour of the Black Mountains to do 21.4km.

Saturday 7th August

A glorious day in the middle of a run of bad weather saw Fiona Macaskill and me (and two others) getting away from Milk Hill in a weak climb that only took us 1600' ato (and still 500' below base) before it petered out. We found one more climb, but in the very light drift we only made it as far as Lockeridge to do 7.9km. Graham Steel (ex Avon pilot) had climbed out earlier and managed to do 35km.

Sunday 1st August

Only 10km from Talybont today - what went wrong Alex?! Meanwhile Pete Taylor manages 18.3km from Talybont.

Saturday 31st July

After 3 hours in the air with a 6,300' cloudbase Alex lands at Tregaron to make 56.3km from Talybont. The 2nd longest flight in the league this year, and a new personal best for Alex. Pete Taylor is stuck on the ground adjusting his speed system when Alex leaves in a boomer, but gets away in a later thermal to do 12.7km.

Friday 30th July

Alex starts his weekend early with 16.8km from Pandy.

Saturday 24th July

The only flight entered so far on this glorious day was Tom Mayne's 37.9km flight from Talybont.

I opted out of going to Wales as we went to the Longleat Balloon Festival in the evening with the kids (and Tim Brunskill) - a wonderful evening! The Action Man balloon was definitely the star of the show! Marcus & Charlotte, Simon and Richard are off to

Chamonix/Annecy for two weeks so at least they'll be quiet for a while!

Sunday 18th July

Nico does 35km from Olivers, Rich and Alex do 27.9km and 28.2km respectively from Merthyr and Marcus 17km from Nant-y-Moel... Read Rich's account [here](#), and Marcus's [here](#). I have a day at the in-law's the pool with the kids!

Saturday 17th July

I get away from Olivers first at about 1345, having a good laugh at Alex and Garry Mitchell and others way beneath me, but my thermal dies out and I end up scratching from bowl to bowl past Rybury and Milk Hill to do 11.2km. Meanwhile Alex and others have the last laugh as they get away in a much stonger thermal and make it to Marlborough (about 20km).

Saturday 10th July

Airwave Challenge semi-final day in SW Wales, with some excellent flights from Hoel Senni. Tom Mayne's [52.8](#)km, Simon Kerr 's28km and Rich Harding's 23.7km are the best. And where was I? - stuck in Bath all morning fixing a tap in a friend's flat that I look after - *%@!!!

Tuesday 6th July

More midweek skiving by Alex and Jim, with Alex doing 23.9 from Merthyr and Jim doing 16.5 from Olivers

Tim Pentreath -

Just a quick reminder of the rules:

1. Flights must be entered within 30 days of making the flight
2. A flight can only be entered if you are a full Avon member at the time of making the flight
3. Airspace restrictions must be observed during your flight - study an airmap before the flight and use one during the flight
4. Flights can be made from any UK site
5. Flights must be over 3 km
6. Witnesses are not required

So there you go - get out there and give it a go! I look forward to receiving details of your flights - Date, Canopy, Site, TO grid ref, Turnpoints, LZ grid ref.

Contact me : Tim Pentreath

at :168 Bradford Road, Combe Down, BATH, BA2 5BZ

home : 01225 832922 (phone/fax)

work : phone - 01225 447003, fax - 01225 318997 (please mark it for my attention!)

tim@pentreath.primex.co.uk

<http://homepages.primex.co.uk/~timpent/avonpqxc>

1999 PG XC League (most recent flight - 15/9/99)

Rank	Name	Glider	1	2	3	4	5	6	Top 6	Av Top 6
1	Alex Coltman	Nova X-Ray	56.3	43.9	34.7	28	26.3	23.9	213.2	35.5
2	Jim Mallinson	Edel Response	48.3	47.9	32.7	30	27.9	24.9	211.8	35.3
3	Tom Mayne	Nova Vertex	52.8	41.9	37.9	33.3	24	14.3	204.3	34.1
4	Richard Harding	Firebird Flame	33.6	27.9	23.7	22.2	19.6	13.7	140.7	23.4
5	Nico Preston*	Ozone Proton	78.6	35	23.4				137	45.7
6	Fiona Macaskill	Advance Sigma 4	23.2	21.1	18.8	17.9	13.8	13.2	108.1	18
7	Peter Taylor	Advance Epsilon 2	21.4	20.6	20	18.3	12.8		93.1	18.6
8	Tim Pentreath	Advance Omega 4	27.8	12.7	11.2	10.7	7.9	6.5	76.7	12.8
9	Simon Kerr	Gradient Saphir	28.6	27.1					55.7	27.8
10	Marcus King	Mac Eden	16.6	11.4	7.5	7.4	6.7		49.6	9.9
11	Merlin Crossingham	Gradient Saphir	18.8	5.7					24.5	12.2
12	Andy Summerskill	Gin Bonanza	23.2						23.2	23.2
13	Dave Yeandle	Gradient Topas	8.4	8.3	3.7				20.4	6.8
14	David Huxford	Gradient Saphir	19.1						19.1	19.1
15	Robert Bilson	Firebird Genesis	9	6.7					15.7	7.8
16	Jean Christophe Schrotter	Advance Sigma 4	15.3						15.3	15.3
17	Charlotte Hedges	Flight Design A4	9.2	4.5					13.7	6.9
18	Martin Stanton	Apco Xtra	11.7						11.7	11.7
19	Mike Andrews	Swing Astral	7.1						7.1	7.1
	Grand Total		508.9	314.7	213.7	167.8	139.1	96.6	1440.8	22.2

Airwave Challenge Semi Finals.

Way back on the 10th July the S.W.Wales Club hosted one of the Airwave Challenge Semi Finals, Nick Roberts was the meet director, and including Team Avon there were seven teams in vying for a place in the Finals.

The Saturday venue for Task 1 was Heol Senni, a N - NE site just south of Sennybridge, the Task was open distance, and for once the weather was looking quite good.

When the window opened the sky was quickly filled with Paragliders as the 36 pilots all wanted to get the drop on the other teams. The day was working well and it wasn't long before the first gaggle was seen to be climbing out over the back. Those of us left behind by that early thermal resigned ourselves to try harder, and not let the others have all the fun, and with redoubled efforts we were shortly to join them. With the absence of a much cloud, finding the thermals was not easy, and it was not long before I was scratching around very low. On seeing a fellow competitor go down just in front of me I decided not to go there, so I went for a small valley to the west of his position. This saved me temporarily but I

continued the flight very low for quite some time. Eventually (it had to happen one day) I got the low save I have been waiting for all these years, as I set up to land in a rugby field, the vario started to beep, taking me back to cloud base. This was the last climb of the day for me, and I was disappointed to see others going overhead as I touched down near Swansea, it was going to be a high scoring day as I had done 28km myself and there were obviously going to be a number of bigger flights on the score sheet that evening.

Later that evening when all the scores were in we were to realise the truth, as it was probably one of the best single days flying in the history of the Competition, with very nearly 1000km flown in total by all pilots, although this includes those that went back for a second go after an early flop over the back. Many people had flown personal bests and our very own Tom Mayne had won the day with a splendid 52.8km, which I am told is only 1.9km short of the site record (good on ya mate).

Sunday alas was (yes you guessed it) not flyable, so that was that. The final scores were as follows.

Team Scores	
S.W.Wales	159.8km
Dunstable	141.8km
Avon	118.1km
S.E.Wales	116.3km
Joint Services A	105.9km
Wessex	82km
Joint Services B	76.8km

Team Avon Scores	
T. Mayne	52.8km
S. Kerr	28.3km
R. Harding	23.5
A. Coltman	13.5km
M. King	6.8km
P. Taylor	3km

31/7/99 - Alex Coltman, 56.3km from Talybont

Saturday, 31st July was a typical, hazy, blue sky, high pressure day, with light, SE winds, so off I trundled to Wales. Once there I spoke to Pete Taylor, who convinced me that it was worth walking up Talybont instead of watching the BPC pilots at play on the Bloreng. After walking halfway up we checked the wind strength and decided to take off.

Having zipped into my romper suit and clipped in I launched, straight into a thermal in which I fumbled to about 600ft ato. Pete was still on the ground, fine-tuning his Epsilon speed system (with a pair of pliers!), so I came back to the ridge, just as a blue Swing Astral took off from the top. We soared around for 10 minutes before the valley triggered again and, this time, I couldn't resist the climb out over the Beacons, along with the Astral.

The view of the peaks is breathtaking but the air downwind of them was a tad interesting and I got well and truly spanked! I was over the A470 before the air calmed down enough for us to find another climb - it always seems easier hunting the core when others are chasing it as well. The Astral and I chased this one 'til it keeled over and died at almost 5000ft (nice, civilised sport). The Astral then went on a glide to the West and I was left alone, tracking towards Sennybridge. There were still only white smudges in my part of the sky - no really defined clouds - so I started looking for ground sources.

Just South of Sennybridge, a ploughed field was being harrowed and the dust plume pulled all over the place as thermals triggered off the slight hill. A Warp Factor 2 glide and a bit of looking around resulted in a climb to nearly 6300ft, and my first cloud (!), over Sennybridge. From here I tracked West-North-West, following the road until past the danger area, with some gorgeous views over towards the Usk Reservoir. Once past 'Halfway Forest' I got back on my North-West heading and lift seemed to be everywhere - I was only losing 200 to 400ft on glides and still boating around at over 6000ft, under nice looking clouds.

I then came across the 'Welsh Desert', which is a huge area of marsh, forest, sheep and no roads (also no beer, no chocolate and no ice creams - hell on earth) that stretches as far as the eye can see, even

from 6 grand! After swallowing the lump in my throat, I convinced myself that, from this ridiculous height, it should be crossable and off I went at Warp Factor 4.

"Something really bad must be about to happen: this is just too easy.", is what I was thinking as, even over the marshy areas glinting in the sunshine, there were nice, fat, gentle thermals, with really weak sink. It was then I noticed a line of huge, grey, cumulus clouds that not only

looked very angry and had bases about 1500ft *below* me but also seemed to be closing fast from the South-West. After reading about flying with sea breezes loads of times, the only thing that came to mind was not to get caught on the wrong side. From where I was watching, my side would do me fine but I still didn't like the look of those clouds and, without making a conscious decision, the more I looked at the clouds, the more Northerly my track became (running away is always the best option!).

As I reached the last part of the 'desert' the lift disappeared, the sky was clear and the sink arrived with a vengeance. I think I had flown into a much weaker sea breeze, coming South-East, and was now cornered. It was final glide time, laid back, speed bar on (Warp Factor 6), hoping to reach civilisation before terra firma. Not even a bubble of lift on the glide but my trusty X-Ray and I screamed over Llanddewi-Brefi and on to the largest town I could see. I fired the retro-rockets and landed in the sports field at Tregaron. Ten seconds later I was surrounded by kids and an old guy who turned out to be an ex-para; after chatting for a while, he invited me back to his house, where he was having a barbecue. Some hair-raising stories, grub and a beer later I made tracks to start the long walk/hitch to meet Pete, who was driving to meet me (cheers, Pete!).

This flight alone was worth learning to fly for and I'd like to thank Dave and Rick at ParAvion for getting me hooked, Robin at Airtopia for selling me my gorgeous X-Ray and everyone in the Avon club who's helped me along the way.

Alex Coltman

13/9/99 - Jim Mallinson, 47.9km from Oliver's

Thank you for your 'Signing off' mail-I feel much less guilty now about telling you about these two lovely midweek XCs!

Monday 13/9/99

TO: Oliver's Castle SU 000 646

LZ: nr. Chievely Services SU 474 716

Duration: c. 2hrs

Glider: Edel Response M

Landing and TO witness: Adrian Thomas.

Distance: 47.9 km.

After three hours at Oliver's under an amazing sky four of us finally got away at 3.30. We got to base at 5200' from where we could see Wales, the Solent and Didcot at the same time. Everyone scattered in different directions and lost each other. I glided downwind to another cloud and realised that the amazing downwind streets we'd been looking at

earlier had now switched to crosswind streets-some sort of wave effect, I suppose.

The gap to the next crosswind street, over Marlborough, looked huge so I headed south along the street I was under and then realised that in order to get anywhere I'd have to cross the gap so I headed back north again meeting up with Dave Cox under a nice big cloud.

I went for the glide, full speed through big sink and connected with the next cloud at about 2,500' the other side of Marlborough, meeting up with Adrian T who had climbed up the outside of the cloud to about 6,000'! It was pretty surreal approaching base but being able to see someone over to the side a good 1000' above me!

Dave hung around too long under the previous cloud; it started to decay and he was very low after the glide and landed just after Hungerford. Adrian and I found another couple of weak climbs before landing next to the A34 at 5.30.

Bliss.

British Open 1999

Le Grand Bornand 15th-22nd August

This article was based on a series of "ePostcards" sent back to the UK from France daily using a Canon Powershot A50 digital camera, a Psion Series 5 and an Ericsson GS18 mobile phone. Please get in touch if you would like more information regarding the technical setup of my mobile "comms centre".

Sun 15th August

Hello all

Just a quick report from the campsite in Le Grand Bornand.

Having left Bath at 0130 on Sunday morning, we had to take a detour via Brighton at 0400 to pick up Fiona's newly logood glider and eventually caught the 0700 ferry from Dover. A large breakfast restored flagging spirits, and set us up for the long drive south.

Pretty easy drive really in Fiona's sponsored Toyota Rav 4, arriving at the campsite in Le Grand Bornand at about 1800 where we met up with Marcus. Erecting the Bedhouin tent was fairly straightforward once we'd sussed out the basic principles (thanks very



The best sky we saw all week - half way down France!

much Karen & Tony - it's excellent). Only trouble is Marcus can't get to his tent now, as it's so big! Tim and I would have been quite cosy sharing our igloo tent! As it is we've got a sleeping compartment each.



Team Avon encampment

It's now 1930 and the campsite and valley are now completely in the shade and it's really quite cool, but it's a lovely evening albeit quite breezy. Apparently it's the first evening that hasn't clouded over by now - it's rained heavily the last few nights, but fingers crossed that won't happen tonight - maybe the unsettled weather here is going to start improving...

We've just had our first beer courtesy of Marcus, and we're about to head off for a pizza, and some 'biere serieux' afterwards.

Anyway, that's all for now - if you get this message and photo then it's a minor miracle!

Bye for now

Tim

Monday 16th August

Bonjour tout le monde.

Aujourd'hui il pleut.

Beaucoup.

Au revoir

Tim

Tuesday 17th August

Well folks, we actually got to fly today, although it wasn't exactly what you might call epic! The promised burning off of the clouds never really happened, and for me (and about 50 others) the day was summed up by a long wait (see photo of us all queuing in a typically English fashion for take off) and a short flight.



Queuing for take-off

We got to the take off - Col du Forclaz - at 1215, took off at 1630, and landed 3km away at 1645! The task was a 55km elapsed time race around the lake, but I think only 10 people made the first turnpoint, and only one person (Simon Olifant) made the second TP to do a massive 16km!



At least the tandems had fun...

A number of people who took off just before the window closed at 1715 had pleasant flights (30-45 mins) but for Marcus, Fiona and me it would have been pleasant to get above take off! Tim B had the best flight of the four of us, making it to the Planfait landing field.

It's a beautiful evening now, the stars are very bright and it's quite cold, which in theory bodes well for tomorrow, but I believe the forecast isn't all that good in fact, so please keep your fingers crossed!

Anyway, that's all folks, I'm getting an early night tonight!

Tim

Wednesday 18th August

Well guess what, the day was canned PG wise, with a forecast of strong winds and rain, which turned out to be exactly right, although there was some sunshine to tempt us into thinking that it might be flyable in Annecy.

But before we tried Planfait, we had the sights and sounds of a wonderful market in Grand Bornand to savour. All kinds of meats and cheeses were on offer, plus jams, honey, spices, olives etc... A feast for the eyes and nose!



There was also an amazing roundabout, not with the usual horses, or tacky cars and trains, but a true mechanical work of art with a space rocket that lifted up through the roof, a pterodactyl that opened and closed it's wings, a locust, a giant octopus, a submarine and a bi-plane and many other weird and wacky things to sit in/on. Emily and Toby would have loved it.



Whilst all this was happening, the clouds were breaking and the sun was definitely trying to come out, so we decided to head off to try to fly at Annecy. There were people actually flying at Planfait but it was definitely windy and not terribly exciting, so we decided to check out the south facing bowl near Col du Forclaz. Alas it was windy here too, so

Tim and I decided to go on a major stomp around the "Dents" and back to the Planfait landing field.

This turned out to be a wonderful three hour walk through some amazing mountain scenery - if you can't enjoy the views from the air, you may as well enjoy them from the ground!



We then met up with Fiona and Marcus and went for a swim in the lake at Talloires - very refreshing, despite the freshening wind and rain, which actually only appeared once we were on the road heading back to the campsite for a mellow evening in...!



Grizzle's girlfriend Grizelda makes her debut on the web

Apparently the forecast is looking better for tomorrow, but the way the weather is generally at the moment you just don't know...!

Anyway, bye for now, from a somewhat damp Grand Bornand.

Tim

Thursday 19th August

Aujourd'hui il pleut aussi! Beaucoup! Actually it wasn't too bad to start with, but later on it was what you might call "no shit rain"! Needless to say not a huge amount of flying, but you have to keep feeling positive. The forecast is for Sat and Sun is to be good, but you never can tell.



errr... view from inside the tent!

Had a good night tonight, I think everyone was drowning their sorrows - thigh wrestling, bottle walking and paper picking up were amongst the highlights! Needless to say, being the lanky git that I am, I won the bottle walking comp!



L-R - Nico, Jonathan ?, Fi, Me, Tim B, Marcus



Nico, Fi and a hand



Serious thighs - Karl and I an Blackmore!



Adrian Thomas shows us how to do it...



...whilst some have to overcome an in-built disadvantage!

Bye for now
Tim

Friday 20th August

Great party night last night as you will have gathered, but alas no sign of any break in the weather yet. The 1000 briefing hinted at improving conditions in the afternoon, and was adjourned to 1300.

Tim B decided he had had enough and left for Geneva and an EasyJet flight back home.

Marcus and I waited for the 1300 briefing, at which, with no sign of the weather improving, the task for today was canned.

This was the turning point for Marcus and me, we had had enough of all this sitting around - if we left now we could be back in Bath early on Saturday morning in time for some serious flying at some of our local hills! And for some serious partying at the Mere Bash tomorrow night. Whether we'll be up for it after all-night travelling remains to be seen!

As we approached Annecy all packed up in the black Panda, the weather was indeed improving - hot and sunny and the nicest clouds we'd seen all week, but there's only so much waiting for better weather that one can do. I'm missing Lisa and the children immensely and just want to get home now despite the sunshine and a possible good comp day tomorrow.

So by the time most of you read this I'll be home, or at least well on the way!

Heading home for sunshine and flying at the Mere Bash!

Au revoir Le Grand Bornand, hello good old Blighty!
See you all soon

Tim



Electricity Cables - A Warning

12.30 Saturday 7th August saw Derek Target; Dave Yeandle and myself on top of Crooks Peak with our paragliders in a light wind 45 degrees off the hill. We sat around chatting in the sunshine for the next hour or so waiting for the wind to come on, watching the queues of traffic stationary on the M5 returning from Devon and Cornwall. The little wind that there was swung further to the SE putting the wind 90 degrees off the hill, we decided a cup of tea was a good ideal and attempted to fly down to the cars. Running off the shoulder running 90 degrees to the hill I was lucky to get airborne and flew down to the landing field by the car park, Derek and Dave packed up and walked back down to the cars. I arrived at the car to see someone walking up the hill with a paraglider, he must have seen me fly down and we all thought it a strange decision that he bothered to carry up in those conditions. Whilst having our lunch we watched the top of the hill and saw a canopy pop up several times eventually the guy got airborne clipping a bush as he flew away from the hill, he past over our heads towards the landing field and Dave went to watch him land. The pilot then flew on past the landing field across a river, and attempted to land in a field the far side of the river to us beyond a row of trees, which was now obscuring our view. The next thing we saw was an almighty flash from the 12000 volt cables he had flown into, the cables fell to the ground and were arcing on the ground the guy was screaming in agony the sparks stopped but he was still screaming. I shouted over to him that we had seen what had happened to him and Derek was phoning for an ambulance, and to hang on in there and I would get to him as quickly as I could. The screaming stopped and I feared the worst. We didn't know how to get across the river, Dave and I drove to the nearest farm to get directions unfortunately the gates to the fields leading to where the pilot was were padlocked, so we had to run over several fields to get to him it was possibly 5 to 10 mins before we got to the field where he was, and had not heard any sound from him since his original screams expecting to find a body I could not believe it as I approached he lifted his head and started talking to me. I got to within 10 feet of him and apart from superficial burns to his left leg and a smell of singed body hair amazingly he seemed OK. He had brought down all three electric cables that were attached to the

poles. He had hit the cables at the lowest point where the cables sag in the middle of the two posts, when he hit the ground the cables parted and fell away from him but his canopy was covering all three cables to one side of him. I knew that the circuit breakers that knock out the supply could fire in again and was concerned for the pilots and my own safety. I asked him if he could crawl to where I was standing which he did, we chatted for a few minutes when there was another almighty bang and arcing the circuit breakers had fired in again and shorted across his canopy setting it on fire in the process, is this guy LUCKY or what. The ambulance arrived possibly 20 to 30 minutes after the accident and carted the casualty off to hospital, he was allowed home later that evening. I was waiting in the field for the Fire Brigade and Electric Company to turn up when Dave returned after helping with the ambulance. I was just explaining to Dave about the circuit breakers firing in and out when they fired in again, if you have never seen cables arcing on the ground it's not somewhere you want to be, so we went to the road to help the Fire Brigade and Electric Company find their way. I left S W E B there making the cables safe and returned later, possibly 2hrs after the accident to try to retrieve what was left of the pilots flying gear but the cables were still not safe. So be warned if you see someone bring down cables assume that they are live hours after the incident. I am sure that after 15 minutes or so of the pilot hitting the cables I would have assumed that it would have been safe to help him which could well have ending up with both of us being killed.

Geoff Rogers Avon Club

Geoff@Java150.Freeserve.co.uk

Airtopia's Romanian Adventure

This is a brief account from three of the folk who visited the Transylvanian region of Romania in February. Mostly written by Mr Courtenay James, some additions from Mr Robin Brown in *Italics* and a brief synopsis by Mr Nigel Doe.

It was agreed the plan of action was for half of us to meet at Robin's Friday evening, off down for a quick pint at his local, followed by everyone sleeping on Robin's floor for some shut eye, before departing for the 6:30 am check in time at Heathrow, where the other remaining five bods would meet us.

Actual events were meet Robin in Kings Arms at 9:30 pm ish, thrown out at 12 am, on to the next pub, where Robin said at 1:30 we should leave as one person was arriving at St Agnes, "Robin's" at 1 am.

Best start as we mean to go on...in a bar! My local pubs closing times are somewhat flexible, in fact we would probably be there still if we didn't have a plane to catch. Nice to flog a flying suit at 1:30 am... all helps with the beer money.

Back to Robin's for The Clothes Show, I had to try on every flying suit, like you do, then the seven of us left for Heathrow in a camper van to meet the remainder, so much for the shut eye. Checked in luggage with Lufthansa then went to the nearest bar for a full English breakfast. Flew to Frankfurt, changed planes then on to Bucharest. No delays, reasonable cabin service, what a good airline!

Through passport control, no problems, down to the luggage conveyer belt to wait for our luggage, where someone makes a crack about wouldn't it be a bar steward if our luggage was still in Frankfurt. Forty five minutes later the twelve of us descended on lost luggage to find out it was still in Frankfurt: twelve paragliders and all the luggage. Why didn't I take any hand luggage? They assured us it would be with us on the next flight which was next day.

Driving out through the outskirts of Bucharest is an eye-opener. I have seen poverty before but somehow I was not expecting to see it in Europe. Everyone was pretty quiet...tired or shocked, who knows. Once up in the mountains things are a lot more affluent although still significantly different from Alpine resorts.

Met Leonard Gregorescu who was our Romanian guide for the week, smallish chap in a shirt and tie who doesn't drink or smoke, spoke impeccable English, and turned out to have an excellent sense of humour, he sure as hell needed it with us. After a two hour

journey by minibus, we reached Sinaia in the Capathen mountains and checked into the Hotel Sinaia. At least we didn't have to tip the porters for carrying our luggage :-)

Off down to a local restaurant, recommended by Leonard. The dozen of us tasted the delights of Romanian food which overall was pretty excellent and cheap. Most of our three course meals cost less than £5. The most expensive meal in one of Sinaia's most lavish hotels which consisted of a starter (caviar), main course, dessert, coffee and a Romanian brandy, plus drinks of wine and beer still totalled less than £10. Large pizzas were a snip at £1.50, half a litre of beer ranged from 35p in a bar to £1.50 in a topless pole dancer club - not that any of us frequented the place - much. If you have a mixed grill, watch out for things that look like fishcakes in breadcrumbs, they're cows brains. Does anyone know the symptoms for CJD..... what was I talking about?

1st night was exceptional... having not really slept at all since Thursday evening I finally peaked at around 3am Sunday morning. Despite being surrounded by gorgeous girls (have I just lost ten years and become incredibly handsome?) I never made breakfast let alone lunch, still without gliders may as well gather my strength.

Luckily Sunday our first day was blown out anyway so most people just explored the town. One prominent member of our entourage did not surface until the evening meal muttering something about tired from the travelling. Nothing of course to do with his departure from disco Diana, absolutely bladdered on Romanian Vodka's at 3am Sunday morning.

Our luggage appeared by courier Sunday night, (another excuse to celebrate with a quick pint). Monday arrived to everyone's disappointment with quite strong winds whistling through the resort. Our guide said there still may be a chance of flying at a remote site called "Bunloc" about 1 1/2 hours drive away. It was a lot smaller and lower than the local mountains. The general feeling was doom and gloom and not a bloody chance of flying judging by the speeds of the clouds above. Upon arrival at the site the wind socks were dangling straight down, Leonard got the locals to start the chair lifts with everyone heading up the mountain. Leonard's side kick Rizz was the first to take off. He reversed launched running backwards, turning around whilst still running! As soon as he was airborne a sharp right was needed

to miss a dozen or so trees. The general consensus was that it was worth walking an extra ten metres away from the cable car, so that a straight run down the hill could be achieved avoiding all the trees. A runway was soon trodden into the foot deep snow. The thick snow / forward launch did prove troublesome for some with everybody achieving at least one top to bottom flight (1650') if not two. The tailwind later on, left some the chance of a lovely walk down from the top. The chair-lift had stopped and staff gone home but for those of us who had managed a second flight, it gave us time in the bar to eat chicken and chips and wash it down with some quick beers.

With gliders now we head off to the edge of the mountains in the hope that the wind is less...it is, in fact there isn't any! Nice little site with a chair lift to the top for 50p. Most folk get at least three good top to bottoms in despite some interesting nil wind launches. Good start lets hope for better tomorrow.

Tuesday's weather was lousy, cloudy with a fresh wind so Leonard drove us to another resort and we hired skis and snowboards for the day.

Wednesday, still blowing quite strong, so it was decided we would try our first site that we flew on Monday (Bunloc). Arrived to find gusty and strong conditions so it was back to Sinaia to do some more exploring.

Thursday, what looked like the best day so far had high clouds still briskly moving across the skies, everybody was now desperate for the flight from Mount Furnica above Sinaia, which would have been a 4500' top to bottom, so most people took the cable car to the top of the mountain only to find wind speeds were over 20mph. Who knows what the windchill was but I was bloody chuffed that I had purchased my new Edel flying suit from Airtopia. More snowboarding for fanatics, a trip around a castle for the less energetic.

The weather is bloody awful, the only conciliation is that it is better than the very serious weather all the Alps are getting...at least we can ski/board. There has been some radical boarding and lots of face/arse landings the last couple of days...I never realised how hard snow is.

Friday, again was being judged as a write off, judging by the moving clouds. A phone call to Bunloc revealed the was wind there. The keener ones had already disappeared to collect their snow boards. Nine of us wanted to judge conditions at Bunloc ourselves. We arrived to find light winds and proceeded to get in at least three flights in very light thermic conditions,

until about 4pm in the afternoon, when the wind picked up. Bugger, I had to pay 50p for the chair lift back down.

Evenings were not only exceptional value, they were also great fun eating out is always a pleasure, the smoked salmon and caviar a must at £1 a portion... Sinaia is a lively little place with a few disco/bars full of very nice young ladies just dying to meet you. Have I died and gone to heaven or are they all trying to get out of the country? Normal getting to bed time being 2-3-4am, depending on stamina.

All that was left was a last evening meal and a quick check to ensure we hadn't missed anything in any of the four cubs. Can't report anything on the last club as we missed last orders at 4am and it was shut. Another early night!

Generally despite the lack of flying, everybody still had a good week away. The less experienced flyers gained invaluable help and advice from the more experienced, whilst giving them a chuckle. For a group with such a range of ages, experience and disciplines in life, there was brilliant team spirit and participation from all.

A great hols' I thought...we are all so used to going to France/Spain/Italy...we know what to expect. Romania is different, yes it is down at heel and scruffy, but I would go back tomorrow. Why? Could be the exceptional value, possibly the very obvious flying potential or maybe the very warm welcome, I would not hesitate to recommend it.

Robin's Synopsis

Nice Place, sites, people, food, crap roads, money & weather EXCELLENT TOTTIE.

PS I'm sorry I am not allowed to disclose anything about "Robin and the Romanian Pole Dancer", but I'm happy to accept the highest bid for the photos.

PPS One member's suitcase was still in Frankfurt when we arrived back at Heathrow, shame :-)

Nigel's View

Amazingly cheap everything, especially the lovely pair of Salomon trekking boots purchased for a bank busting £25!! Excellent mountains, most definitely worth a summer visit but NOT via Luthansa or was that Lost-baggage-HA!! Snowboarders paradise, powder, powder everywhere, not good on your glider unless you were lucky enough to have a room to yourself with a spare bed or in my case clothes horse come paraglider drier.

Learnt to snowboard in 1.5 days, they don't have much piste snow so unless you are mister powder hound skier a board was easier in waist deep white stuff. It cost 90,000 lei (£4.00ish) to hire for a

day. Also I found it is possible to make your way back down the entire mountain via the lifts at the end of the day by acting dumb and showing the lift guys your radio kept in the same pocket as your magnetic lift card which strangely enough ran out an hour earlier at 3pm :) Anyone develop a set of stolen negatives for me??? Yeah I have, 20 or I'll show them to Simone...

Note: If anyone has any old gliders or harnesses etc they are desperate for kit and really cannot afford it. There is no association or training scheme as such. There are only a few pilots in the country but there is a passion for flying that is a pleasure to see.

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