

If undelivered please return to:

The Membership Secretary, Avon HG&PG Club,
c/o Bramble Cottage, Rectory Lane, Compton Martin BS40 6JP

The cover of the magazine NOVA. The title 'NOVA' is written in large, bold, pink letters across the top. Below it, the subtitle 'The Magazine of the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club' is written in a smaller, pink font. In the top right corner, there is a logo for 'AVON Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club'. The logo features a stylized white bird or cloud shape above the word 'AVON' in white capital letters. To the right of 'AVON', there is a small graphic of a hang glider. The background of the cover is a photograph of a paraglider flying over a coastal area with fields and water. In the bottom right corner, the date 'August 2006' is printed in a small, pink font.

On the front cover: Flying over Lake Phewa, Nepal. Photo: Richard Danbury

Editorial

The nice thing about being Editor is that you can juggle the copy so that there's not much space for your editorial. Then you don't have to write much. Unlike our Chairman, who gets harassed and harried into writing a whole page every time. Ha ha!

But in spite of my brevity this issue is bulging in a comely sort of way, considering it's summer and you're all off flying instead of sitting at home writing about it. But don't be fooled by its appealing exterior, within its pages a monster lurks. That monster is Talybont, and Rod Taylor's account of severe turbulence there is sure to have you have you hiding behind the sofa. And whatever you do, don't read Mark Nunan's recollections of his time in Bir until after the 9 o'clock watershed.

But there are also some bits for those in short trousers, including the first in a new series for recently qualified pilots, and a full write-up on that pesky Bath Gap. And we get a geometry lesson from our resident tutor, Ken Wilkinson.

Are you sitting comfortably...?

Richard



A hang glider on a blue day at Kettle Sings. (For those of you reading in black and white, the blue sky is the bit above the green grass.)

**Photo:
Richard Danbury**

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

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

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editor@avonhpg.co.uk or nova@avonhpg.co.uk, Tel: 01761 221 731
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Chairman's chunter

Sticking to his schedule more tightly than Wayne Seeley in a low save, your editor has compiled another packed edition of Nova, full of tales of derring-do, top tips, and chronic diarrhoea. Read on, but not for the faint hearted, or those with a fear of Imodium.

I hope that you have all been getting generous fixes of top quality airtime over the summer, snatching those elusive moments from the mire of unflyable weekends, and flyable days stuck in the office. Looking at the league and the diary, it has clearly been a pretty good year, but one where you need your mind on the job and your wits about you. Neither of which I can really claim with any conviction.

So instead of chuntering on about how epic the season has been, I have had a week of relaxing in Piedrahita, punctuated by a couple of days of great flying, to think about what makes this sport so special to us all.

A couple of weeks ago a few of us were lucky enough to find ourselves on Merthyr on a Tuesday, under a good-looking sky with the wind on the hill. We all flew, Stafford cracking his personal best over 70km, and I enjoyed 20km or so over the valleys. Having made it to a road after rather carelessly landing in the middle of a rather large stretch of bracken-covered hillside, I stuck my thumb out, hoping to get a lift back to the Heads of the Valleys road.

Within minutes a car with three people and a telltale boot full of paragliders pulled up. I squeezed in the back, and off we went. It turns out that the driver was a microlight pilot, who had happened to see one of my fellow lift catchers come in to land as he was gardening. He got in his car and picked the chap up, and set off on his way back to Merthyr. About ten minutes later, the lucky passenger's mate called to say he had landed a few km's further East. So they turned around and went to pick him up too, before bumping into me on the way back to the hill.

The driver had done all this just because he was a fellow airman, and having seen a pilot come down, decided to help him out. He must have driven for at least an hour and a half ferrying us around, and given up his afternoon, for no other reason than a shared bond of airmanship.

All of us, from the first day our feet left the ground in school have felt that flying is something special, otherwise we would not be here. It still amazes me every time I heft my glider onto my back, that the contents of a rucksack (or an almost portable large tube) can, in the right hands, take us to the clouds and over hundreds of miles of countryside. Or the same kit can put a smile on your face as you skim over the grass and bushes, touch and go on a light day, or just muck about on a sand dune.

All of this is afforded to us out of the goodwill of those who own or manage our sites and control our skies. It would be so easy for them to say "no", we are potentially just hassle to them, but thankfully they go out of their way to let us enjoy our sport, despite the ever present threat of "Ambulance Chasers Direct", or Easyjet's lobbying for a lower approach to their latest cash cow airport.

In order to maintain the freedom we enjoy so much, the sport needs to nurture new converts who will add some weight to our rather lean influence. It is a crying shame that schools are calling it a day because of dwindling numbers and increasingly litigious insurance companies. The news that Robin is going to move on from Airtopia, having been one of our most successful sources of new talent is a real loss, and I hope he finds a replacement to keep the school running.

So as you reflect on the best flights you have had this year, and enjoy the last few months of the summer, think about the future of the sport. Tell your mates what a great feeling it is as your feet leave the ground, or you wind away from the earth towards the clouds. Get them to give it a go, or get their mates along too and make a weekend of it with a school. More people means more money for the schools, more gliders sold, more research done to make even better wings, more fun for us and a stronger future for all of us who enjoy our freedom in the sky.

Well once again I've gone on longer than a late-night Spanish rock concert, so after a quick reminder to BUY YOUR TICKET FOR THE MERE BASH, stick the kettle on, or grab a meeting room to pretend you are hard at work, and sit back and enjoy another jam-packed edition of your favourite Nova.

Safe flying,
Richard.

The Mere Bash 2006

We are holding our annual summer fly-in party over the weekend of 1st-3rd September. This promises to be a fun weekend, whatever the weather, with a serious attitude towards partying for pilots, their families and friends.

The main festivities take place on Saturday evening, starting with a "bring your own meat" style barbecue at 6pm.

The evening entertainment includes live music from cover band "This Way Up", and a spectacular belly dance performance from the "Hieroglyphyx". Whilst the adults enjoy the local ale in the marquee bar, or around



the campfire, there will be a bouncy castle for the kids to play on.

Tickets cost £10 in advance or £12 at the gate. The official camping is available from 12 noon on Saturday 2nd September, although anyone involved in the organization is welcome to camp over on Friday night. For full details and a map please visit the club website www.avonhpgp.co.uk. For tickets please email socialsec@avonhpgp.co.uk or contact Cathy Lawrence on 01985 214 579. Cheques should be made payable to: "Avon Hang gliding Club" and sent to Social Secretary, Avon HPGP, 112 Prestbury Drive, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9LE.

Gate 10 for the subcontinent, Imodium for the incontinent

Mark Nunan brings us reminiscences of the fabled trip to Bir. It was only last year, but is already the stuff of legends.

In response to my request for some biographical details, Mark left the following answer-phone message: "The details are, erm, what am I flying... a moderately, well, quite a porous, um, large UP Groove, a delightful um new purpley colour, well lilacy really. Um, oh when did I er, flying since... well I first tried it in 1990 erm, subsequently started again in 2000, have intermittently since then. Since then really. Flown in a variety of places, favourite flying site... don't really have a favourite as such, but possibly... if anything the little one in Switzerland called the Wispile, that's W-I-S-P-I-L-E ... near Gstaad... because the family enjoys walking on it and skiing on it..." Thankfully, we are spared any more because at that point the message cut out.

Tuesday 18/10/05

13st 12lb, packets of airline peanuts consumed 26, alcohol units 25 (but effectively two days' worth due to time difference), number of dodgy curries consumed 1, calories 10,546.

Awakened by the breakfast trolley as we pass over Afghanistan. The view of the latter is infinitely better than the taste of the former. Even from an altitude of 35,000ft you gain an impression of an unconquerable barrenness.

Landing at Delhi you are immediately struck by the difference. The runway work-party sitting on the runway as the plane passes, the turbaned tractor driver giving way to the plane as it taxis to the terminal, the dilapidated Turkmenistan Airways boarding steps standing forlornly.

After disembarking one enters a universal style airport terminal where everyone meets with their first experience of Indian bureaucracy (second if they attended the embassy at Aldwych in person). In queuing for immigration one meets the Indian polite courtesy, but tinged with impatience. If you fail to do as instructed you are either shouted at or gesticulated at in a very theatrical manner.

A stop to change money is of note purely because of the high denomination notes we are given, so providing little chance to tip. Indeed we must seek ways of breaking into our Rs1000 notes as a bottle of water is Rs13.

A last struggle with Customs, who require me to complete once more my disembarkation form, finally sees me out of the official area. I catch up with Martin and Staff. The search for the official taxi route takes us past many touts and out of the building proper. We are also hit by the heat of Asia: 35°C.

We discover the official taxi rank office, make payment and collect our chit – taxi 451. We are accompanied by a cluster of eager-to-help boys. However, in their eagerness to assist, they somehow incur the displeasure of the head taxi wallah who applies his hand to one junior's cranium with an almighty force. With some effort they manage to fit both ourselves and our baggage into one taxi. We finally depart the taxi rank but not without one final piece of bureaucracy – the chit is checked as we leave the taxi park where a clerk copperplates the details into an enormous Scrooge-style ledger.

Our taxi driver is notable from the start for the enthusiasm of the driver to proceed at speed. He endeavours to pass a chicane of barriers with no braking and little deceleration. Met with our mock imitations of screeching tyres he perceives his driving style to be approved of, and continues. However, his near collision with a lorry enforces him to drive slightly more sedately. My legs remain braced for the rest of the journey, still fearing for my life. The driver seeks solace by turning the radio on at full volume.

The journey thereafter is characterised by a mayhem of Asian traffic. Buses, cars, taxis, and rickshaws of differing varieties. All painted differently and bearing their own scars of having endured the roads of Delhi. Everyone presumes they have the right of way, but no one respects it.

Our hotel is named the Chand Palace. It does not live up to its name. Being slightly off the road that it bears in its address, we actually pass it once. During our search the driver panics and starts to deny any knowledge of English. Ideally he would like to leave us either at another hotel or in the street. However, by having the chit we have leverage and eventually our hotel is discovered down a side street – very palatial!

Checking in requires the usual formalities though it is further complicated, as we require an additional room for I am an interloper. However, this is obtained.

After a quick wash we embark upon our first taste of the Delhi experience. We dine at the United Coffee Bar where we enjoy our first real Indian meal and beer. We particularly note the difference in naan bread, which is significantly better than that normally experienced in the UK.

Sunday 23/10/05

11st 2lb, number of trips to convenience 28, alcohol units nil, calories nil.

The train journey continues. While most gain a fitful night's sleep, I note the details of Indian railways first air conditioned toilets. My frequent ablutions are interrupted by the requirement to regurgitate most of the previous night's meal. I finally manage to gain some sleep myself.

We finally arrive at Pathankot where we are met by our taxis. We then experience the usual hazardous series of events that occurs when you put Indians and mechanised vehicles together, further compounded by them still building the road. The journey passes into a hazy memory of suppressed nausea and defaecation. After some 4-5 hours we finally arrive at the house.

After briefly completing the requisite bureaucratic forms stating our intent to participate in a hazardous sport, with no intent to sue Himachal Pradesh, we decide to seek an afternoon flight. Clambering into little vans we experience the 45 minute drive to take-off. The first 10km is on tarmac, the final 5km is on a dirt track – a continuation of the Indian Road Experience.

Brief preparations to fly are made. However, eventually I submit to my failing bowels and after yet more diarrhoea and stomach cramps I return in the vehicles. I retire to bed.

Monday 24/10/06

10st 5lb (my ideal weight!), number of trips to convenience 36 (am running out of paper!), alcohol units nil, calories 10.

The day is spent at the house, for having experienced a second night of sleep punctuated by regular visits to the en-suite, I opt for a day of rest. I sleep on the balcony, from where I can see much of the aerial activity.

After yet more sleep I "indulge" in a little boiled rice at the behest of the others. Jealously I listen to tales of derring-do in the air, before retiring to bed.

Tuesday 25/10/06

9st 8lb (hmm), number of trips to convenience 31 (am using the chapattis I cannot eat), alcohol units nil, calories 256,

I partake of a light breakfast, having once more had interrupted sleep, though I have now started taking the Imodium. With a fresh packet of "baby-soft cloth wipes" I agree to join the others and go flying. As we near the top I relapse and feel quite nauseous. Whist the others plan out their cross-country routes I endeavour to sleep.

Eventually I decide to take off. Preparing in an unfit state, my line check is inadequate. With snagged C risers I launch and career straight back into the hillside some 50m to the right. A foolish mistake!

With greater regard I am more rigorous in all pre-flight checks. I launch successfully. I then experience a 50 minute roller coaster flight of 800fpm up and 1000fpm down, whist only achieving a height of 8700ft asl.

When once more a sense of nausea overcomes me, I head towards the landing field. The flight cannot end quickly enough. Finally, when setting foot on terra firma, I bow not to the waiting audience of local Indian schoolchildren, but so that my regurgitated breakfast does not end up on my feet.

Wednesday 26/10/06

8st 5lb, number of trips to convenience 30 (am running out of chapattis), alcohol units nil, calories 180.

Ken asks me if I slept well. My response was affirmative – I did sleep well, when I was not vomiting.

At least the frequency of the diarrhoea has reduced! However, on checking the instructions I discover that it is one tablet after every bowel movement, not two.

Again I prepare to fly. My flight deck has toilet paper, wet wipes, Paracetamol, Imodium and Piriton – a veritable medical cabinet. My flight is for 80 minutes, with 1100fpm up and 1200fpm down. I make it over the first ridge but then spend much time scratching to get enough height to attempt the next traverse. Needless to say, my constitution has taken its toll, and I have to seek an appropriate landing site.

I pick out the perfect dry paddy field in which I plan to vomit. Alas my timing is awry, and I vomit whilst still airborne.

After getting a lift back, I return to bed. The evening meal is Tibetan Fajitas. I endeavour to eat a little, with Graham consuming my left-overs.

Thursday 27/10/06

7st 13lb, number of trips to convenience nil, alcohol units nil, calories 2569.

Finally a night of uninterrupted sleep, though I possibly feel worse for the experience because it is so unusual.

After a breakfast for which I still have no appetite, once more we head upwards. Now in a physical and mental state to enjoy it, I now experience some wonderful flying of the sort I have not enjoyed before. Getting to 9500ft, I look down and note all the features – the mountain tracks, the cultivated plateaux, the streams, the trees – I look up and as the ridges are topped so the much larger mountains are espied for the first time. The whole view is awesome, and I fly in the great aerial playground with a grin on my face.

Eventually I land, still with no sense of nausea or impending bowel movement!

Whist opting out of the beer, I do finally consume my first real meal. The first four days have seen many jokes about my marking of landing sites, and not having to worry about the max. weight of my glider – oh how we laughed!

Friday 28/10/06

7st 12lb (have some catching up to do), number of trips to convenience nil (wonder if I should stop taking the Imodium?), alcohol units 56 (but average over this week quite low), calories 15,182 (ditto).

Breakfast is the usual protracted process, as each person's meal is brought up in turn [sic – geddit?? Ed.]. During this process Mike Humphries' absence the previous evening is noted, and whilst an appearance is made he admits to succumbing to the upset stomach. Suitable condoling comments are made.

Once more we ascend the mountain in convoy, but rather than the usual sprint for places on launch, we take "chai" at the little hut – an acquired taste that I clearly need to work on! We begin to walk to the top take-off in ones and twos. Here we sit and wait, admiring the inversion that is so low we might reach out and touch it.

As midday arrives, pilots start to take off. The house thermal, if working, may provide sufficient lift to break through the inversion.

I launch and head towards the house thermal where I gradually find the lift. With the flying community being made up of many different nationalities, so these characteristics are shown in the thermal core – effectively a melee of flyers all trying to out-climb each other but with little regard to others.

Eventually, at some 900ft afo, I decide to jump the gap to the next ridge. Having ensured that I have more height than last time, and aiming for a shorter gap, I successfully traverse.

I thermal gently to regain the lost height, aware that between me and the intended aim, the Red Temple and the golf course, located on the second significant ridge, lies a smaller ridge which I failed to climb away from last time. Departing the first ridge I reach the smaller ridge higher than previously. However, I still have to spend some time working the lift. Immediately above the ridge the lift is strong and rough – pitching and rolling. Eventually I succeed in climbing above this little ridge, and my goal is becoming achievable. When high enough above the ridge I find smoother but still strong lift, and I head across to the golf course.

I once again arrive slightly below ridge height (just as two pilots launch, having stopped for afternoon tea). Very hard work to get back to ridge height, and once more as you attain that elusive level you experience the rough air as the rising air from both sides converges. Eventually I have enough to pass over the top, seeking improved lift on the other side – same crap! Further work, watching others arrive high and depart even higher. Eventually, having endured some really crap lift, I find a decent thermal that takes me back to my original launch height. Looking down on the Red Temple I decide to head back.

Heading back I collect a bit more lift off the horrible little ridge to ensure my arrival at the ridge near launch. From here I look across to launch, where Rich Harding proposes a top landing. Instead I head towards the landing field, arriving with a couple of thousand feet to spare. I have a pleasant float, admiring the views of the Tibetan colony and the grandeur of the monasteries.

I finally land, 125 minutes after launch, but more importantly having achieved my aim of getting to the Red Temple and back!

My very first...

... 360-degree turn.

Here is the very first in a series of articles for pilots who are about to do something for the very first time (no, not that!) If you've recently qualified with your CP, there are probably quite a few techniques and manoeuvres that you haven't tried yet. If so, this series is for you. This time we look at the 360° turn. Sounds simple? It is, but there are a few things to watch out for.

More experienced pilots generally do 360's so that they can stay in the best part of a thermal. But your first 360 should definitely not be an attempt to thermal! You need to concentrate on doing the turn in a well-controlled manner, and the fewer distractions you have, the better.

The greatest hazard with doing 360's is the danger of colliding with the hill during the downwind part of the turn. During your training you have no doubt done some ridge soaring. While ridge soaring you spend your time facing out from the hill into wind, or crabbing along the ridge facing partly into wind. Because you're facing into wind, your groundspeed is quite slow. So things happen fairly slowly.

But your first 360 will involve turning downwind for a few moments as you make the turn. This will be the first time you have ever flown downwind, and unless the wind is very light, you will notice that your groundspeed is much faster than you are used to.

This increase in groundspeed is what can lead to a mishap. If you start a 360 a little way out from the ridge, you will suddenly find yourself flying towards the ridge fast. If you're not higher than the ridge top, you fly into the hill. If you are higher than the top, you may fly over the ridge and out of the lift band, and you may find yourself trying to do a downwind top landing.

So, do your first 360's well away from the ridge. The ideal time is during a high top-to-bottom flight. Fly well out from the hill, make sure that you have more than enough height to reach the bottom landing field, and then try your 360. Don't rush it, but don't dawdle either – remember you'll be covering ground much faster while you're facing downwind.

To make the turn, apply some brake and some weight-shift on the inside of the turn, and keep a little brake on the outside too. Take it gently at first to get a feel for it. You'll probably find that your wing has a natural tendency to come out of the turn, so the turn may take a bit more effort than you first expected. On the other hand, if you find that the wind speed in your face starts to rapidly increase, you're overdoing it so ease up on the inside brake.

As you turn, try to get a feel for:

- the change in groundspeed as you make the turn,
- the rate at which you can make an unhurried turn on your glider.

The Blorenge in SE Wales is an ideal site to try this from. It's a nice high hill that gives the opportunity for a long top-to-bottom.

A lot of Alpine sites are good for long, high top-to-bottoms too. But Alpine flying is usually light-wind flying, so when you come home to the windy UK remember to expect your downwind groundspeed to be that much faster.

Alternatively, if you're ridge soaring and you find that you can get 500ft or more above the top of the hill, give it a try. When you've had enough ridge soaring, head for the bottom landing and when you're well away from the ridge, try your 360.

So, it's as simple as that. Except for two more things you should do:

- Ask a club coach to talk this through on the hill before you try it. Every day and every site is different, so take advice from someone who knows the site and can assess the conditions on the day.
- Look all around you before you start your 360 to make sure there are no other pilots near you, and keep an eye on where you are relative to other pilots and the hill while turning.

Many happy (re)turns!

Two triangles in South Wales, 3rd June 06

Ken Wilkinson has been flying paragliders for six years and did seven years on hang-gliders in the '80s, before giving up to go climbing. He did four years in the HG league and one in France when he finished 5th overall, winning a four-day competition in Laragne. His personal best is 80km on a PG and he's desperate to do 100km! On a hang-glider it's 170km. He teaches part time at Downend School (skyver!), and his favourite colour is ham salad with pickle.

Here Ken describes two of his lesser achievements.

Rich Danbury asked for an article last mag. and I didn't comply! I didn't seem to have anything special to write about. After the last weekend I feel I do!

The BCC has provided excellent fun for many and last weekend (3/4 June) was no exception, especially for me. The weather forecast was perfect for BBQs according to Weatherjack, but in the week's run up he indicated an inverted day with little or no cloud. I was more determined to have a good party on Saturday but was nevertheless heartened to see the Lasham and Nympsfield forecasts speak of good convection strength. It would be better in the mountains. So saying, with a light northwesterly we went to the north face of the Blorenge and sat out to enjoy the sunshine and beautiful views.

Even early in the morning there were high cumulus forming in the Beacons, and several pilots tried to get into lift, side landing as the weak cycles passed. We discussed the possibility of the Skirrid/Sugarloaf triangle, and Lynn Rees, the Meet Director, was happy for any scoring option to be considered valid. At around 1 pm several gliders, myself included, tried the air and three of us managed to scrape away: Al

Davies, Graham Richards and moi, all from the Avon Club. The climb was slow and we fed off each other feeling for the best lift, with Graham doing particularly well on his Aspen. We eventually made 2000ft afo before the lift died, so we crossed to the south of Abergavenny where a large active cloud appeared to be growing. We got up well in this and I suggested the triangle to Al and

Graham on the radio, but they seemed keen on a downwind XC. I was not happy that this would be successful as the sea air seemed to have come in and so decided to go for the triangle.

I headed off for the Skirrid and got lowish, but then hit 5m/sec lift off the lower slopes of the hill to near base. The clouds in the mountains appeared to be strongly active but the into wind leg was still to come. Heading north to the cloud I was surprised to see my groundspeed was over 30km/h. (This is one of the most useful functions of a GPS.) It seemed that in the mountains the drift was not there at height. This boded very well as I had visions of flying the Skirrid all afternoon trying to punch forward unsuccessfully. I got low to the east of Sugarloaf and recalled all the possible 'gloop points' (where honey would drip off if the profile of the mountains were covered in honey and turned upside down) and was rewarded with a massive, smooth 7m/sec climb to base at 6000ft. This now felt very good, looking down on Sugarloaf and seeing that the return to Blorenge would be easy. I wanted to maximise the triangle and there was a growing cloud over Crickhowell, which I tried to go for, but 7m/sec sink persuaded me to go for a

smaller triangle and be sure. I sauntered back to the hill, slowly loosing height, smugly watching gliders launch from time to time only to side land. I was over the moon [Gosh, you were high! Ed.], and realised that I may be even more annoying than usual, but Lynn Rees and Iain Mackenzie were happy to offer congratulations. They had been jealously watching me all the way round, pinned to the ground.
Score: 22.4km x3, i.e. 67.2km.

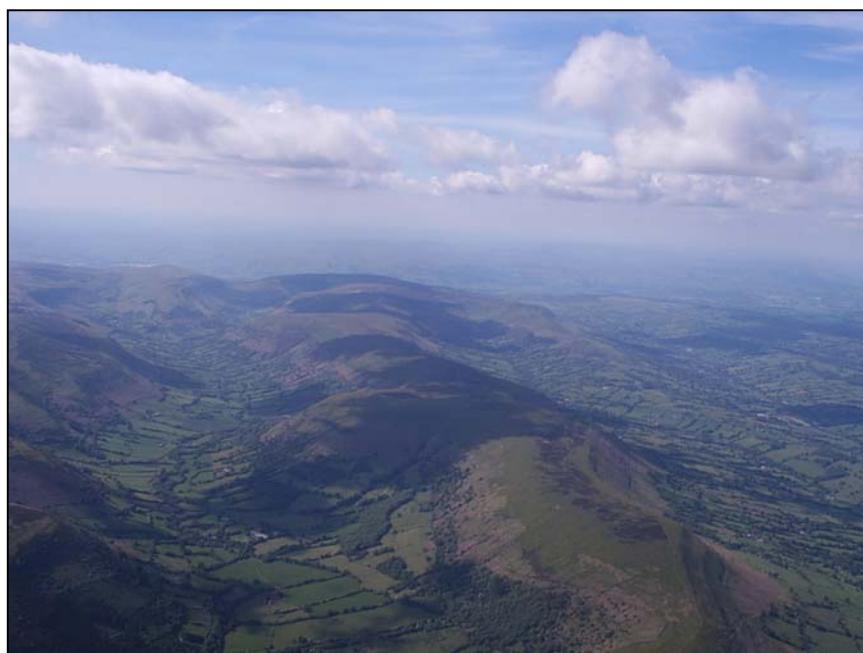
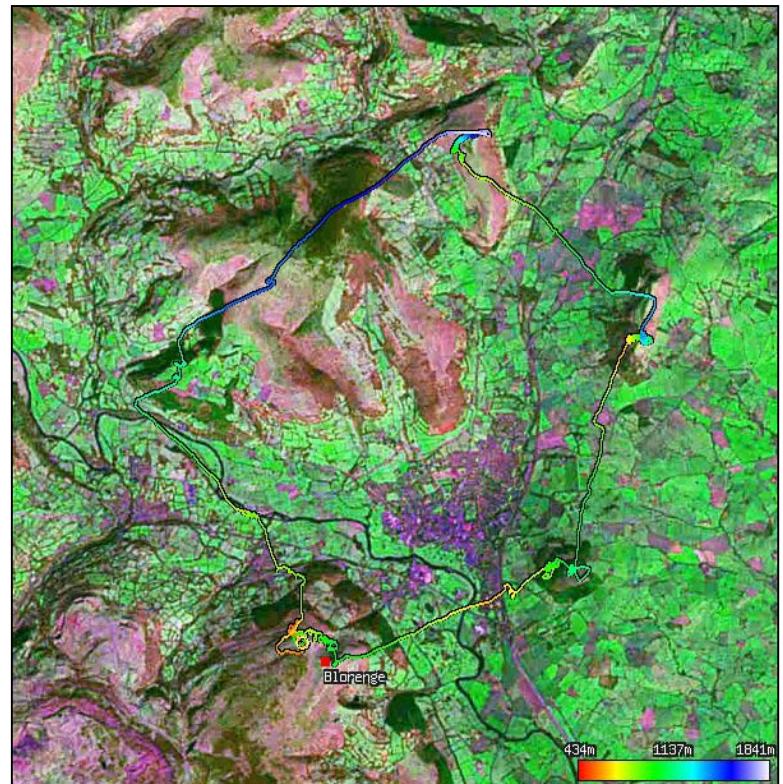


Photo: Ken Wilkinson

Half an hour later I decided to fly down, and didn't bother with my jacket (like my first flight) as I had no intention of doing anything special, but a cycle came through and I was vacuumed up again at 5m/sec. There was a stonking convergence cloud, which had been there all day, and it would have been rude not to use it. I initially thought about going to Hay Bluff, out and return, 25km away, and this was certainly possible, as the lift was strong, and I was straight-lining most of the way, only turning in lift of more than 2 m/sec. It was getting late and I was tired, but the clouds just kept drawing me forward and up, to 5900ft max. I got to the Pandy top take off and headed south to try to make another triangle but decided the clouds looked too poor that way so headed back for Castle Meadows, losing height. 7m/sec lift soon put me up to around 5000ft over Abergavenny, and I cruised along the convergence line losing very little. I cut north to take off, maximised the turn point and flew back over take off to go straight back to Castle Meadows landing at 5.30pm ready for a well earned pint. (Thanks Rod! I needed it.) This one came in at a 31km flat triangle, x2 = 62km, with just under 2 hours flying time. So 130km in the XC league in a day. Phew! And on a DHV 1/2 glider.

Avon had definitely won the day but the main memories will be the views of the mountains from 6000ft, on an exceptional day. I think the big triangle (Bloreng/Bay Bluff/Pen y Fan: 80km) will probably eventually be done on a paraglider if conditions are like last Saturday again. That would be one to dream about!

Glider: Nova Mambo, harness: Sup'air Evo XC, vario: Digitfly.



Ken's tracklog. For those of you reading in black and white, the colour of Ken's track indicates his height.

The Bath Gap

Richard Zaltzman and Tim Pentreath explain a change in controlled airspace that is likely to affect most of the club's XC pilots.

Overview

As you are probably aware, there are significant airspace changes afoot which will impact the Bristol, Bath and Cardiff areas. What used to be uncontrolled airspace to the east of Bristol, is now a series of CTA (Controlled Traffic Areas), stepping down from 3,500ft to the east of Bath to 1,500ft over Keynsham.

This has been implemented to ensure that all traffic approaching Bristol or Cardiff Airports is managed in controlled airspace. At the moment, it's a free for all, with no guarantee where the 'planes are going to be before they enter the Bristol CTR around the airport.

Thanks to the sterling efforts of our sites officers, we have a special dispensation to raise the outer block of airspace from 3,500ft to 4,500ft when we want to go cross country to the east of Bath. This is useful when flying south from Leckhampton or possible Selsley, or North from Mere. Figure 1 shows the airspace map as it currently stands.

Figure 2 shows the airspace, shaded by altitude. As you can see, the easternmost part of the airspace is already 4,500ft, but if you are crossing Bath, it is 3,500ft above mean sea level. Given that there is a spot height of 719ft in the hills to the east of Bath, this means that you have less than 2,800ft above ground level to clear this area under normal conditions.

"The Bath Gap" as it has become known, is the block of airspace at 3,500ft, marked on the map as CTA6. When this is raised, the airspace appears as in Figure 3.

Figure 4 shows the airspace in profile. Note the airfield at Colerne, which touches the edge of CTA6. Flying over Colerne is technically possible, but you would have to be between 4,500ft and 2,600ft AMSL all the way across (Colerne airspace is GROUND LEVEL to 2,000ft).

Figure 5 shows the airspace with the gap open.

Opening the Bath Gap

If you are planning to fly through this area, the procedure to follow is pretty simple:

1. Phone Bristol ATIS (01275 473666) to check whether the Bath Gap has been activated. There will be an answer phone message if the gap is open, or you will get through to an operator if not.
2. If yes (and this will most often be the case), no further action needed.
3. If no, contact one of the five nominees (Tim Pentreath, Ken Wilkinson, Stafford Evans, Nev Almond or Richard Zaltzman) who will phone up and activate the Bath Gap. Numbers will be available on the website under the Committee Contacts section.
4. Wait a few minutes and then confirm by going back to step 1.

Once the Gap is open, it will remain open until 19:00 or official night. There may be times when they will not open the gap, in particular if there is fog at Bristol Airport.

In summary:

The Bath Gap gives freeflying pilots an extra 1000ft of airspace over the eastern side of Bath, to enable a transition through uncontrolled airspace from north to south. Things you need to keep in mind are:

- They will close this if they get infringements, e.g. if you decide to fly anyway above 3,500ft when the gap has not been opened.
- If you are flying under an airway, the traffic can be routed only 500ft above the floor of that airway. I.e. if the gap is open, and you are flying along at 4,400ft, just under the base of the airway, you could have an Airbus passing only 600ft above you. The turbulence from that would not be pleasant, so think about how much altitude you want to take.
- All CTR heights are stated in QNH. If you are planning on making the most of your ceiling, make sure you have set your altimeter accurately.
- And finally, we are very fortunate to have been granted this concession, and it is really because we are grouped in with more influential bodies from the gliding clubs and military. Please don't abuse the privilege!

There is also a procedure for raising the airspace over Ubley. Currently Ubley is not a controlled Avon site, and any pilots flying there do so of their own accord. However, should you decide to fly Ubley, the number to call is 01275 437714, at least 30 minutes before you are planning to fly. Figure 6 shows the Ubley and Halesland Block A, which you will need to activate.

The Ubley Glider Block raises the airspace from 1500ft to 2500ft amsl. The block is roughly a triangle from the southern edge of the Bristol CTR, with a straight boundary at the western end towards Blagdon. The northern boundary follows the A368 from Blagdon church to Compton Martin church.

If flying XC you will also want to activate the Halesland Glider Block, which is south of the Ubley Glider Block. This raises the base in this part of the CTA from 3000ft to 4000ft.

Our letter of agreement allows any Avon HGPGC member to call. If you do so, please call when you have finished so they can close the block.

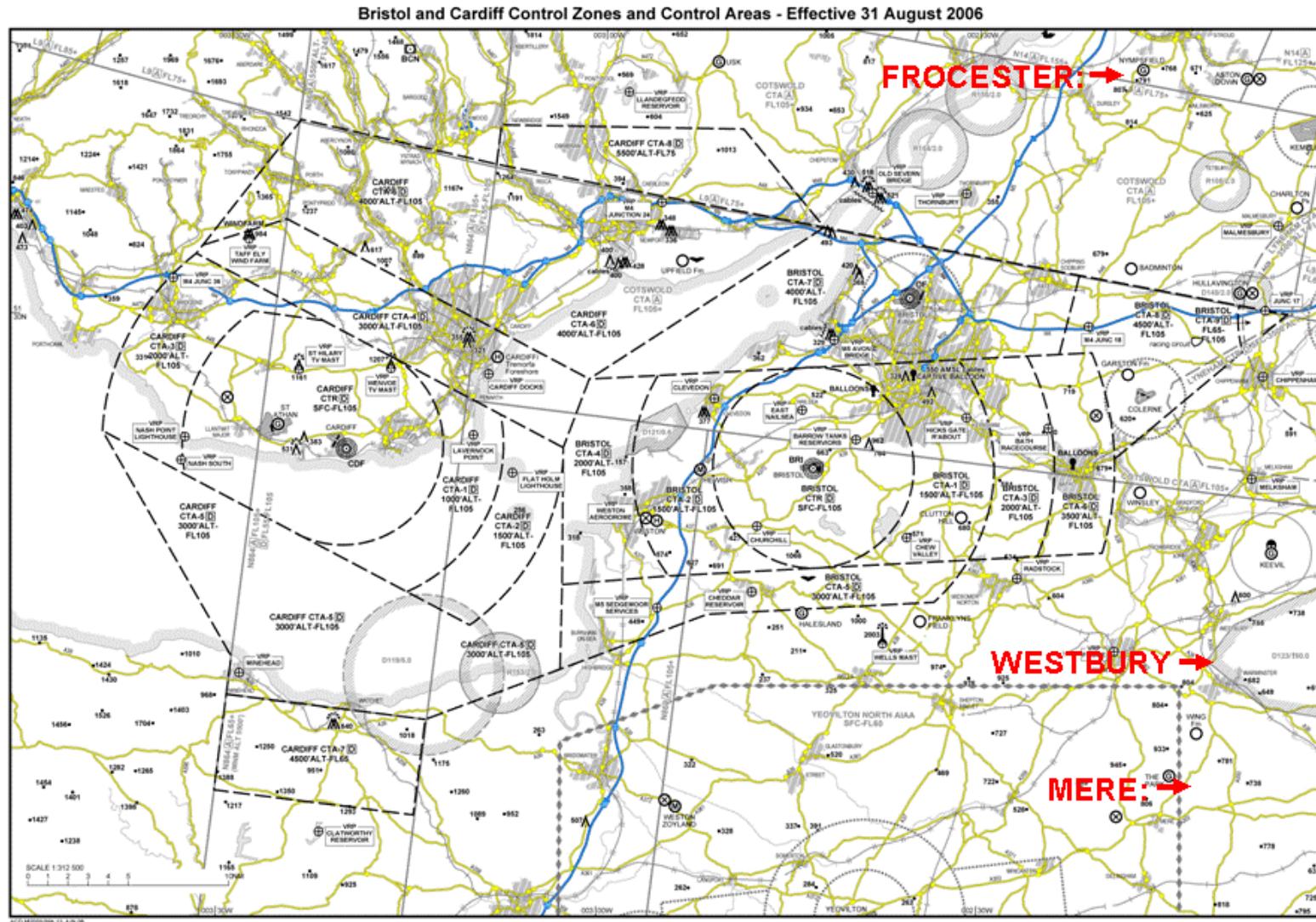


Figure 1 – New airspace map

Bristol and Cardiff Control Zones and Control Areas - Effective 31 August 2006

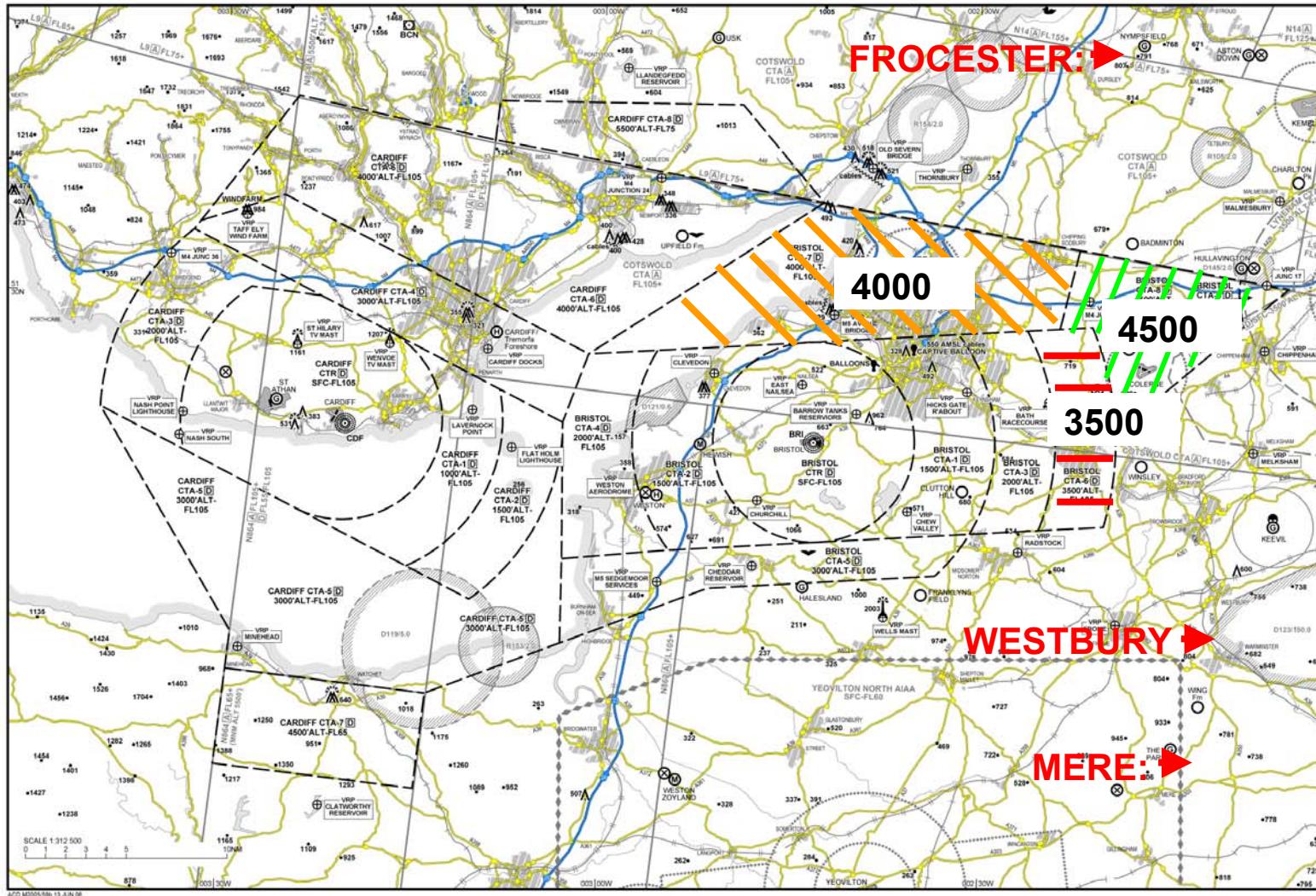


Figure 2 – Airspace blocks – GAP CLOSED

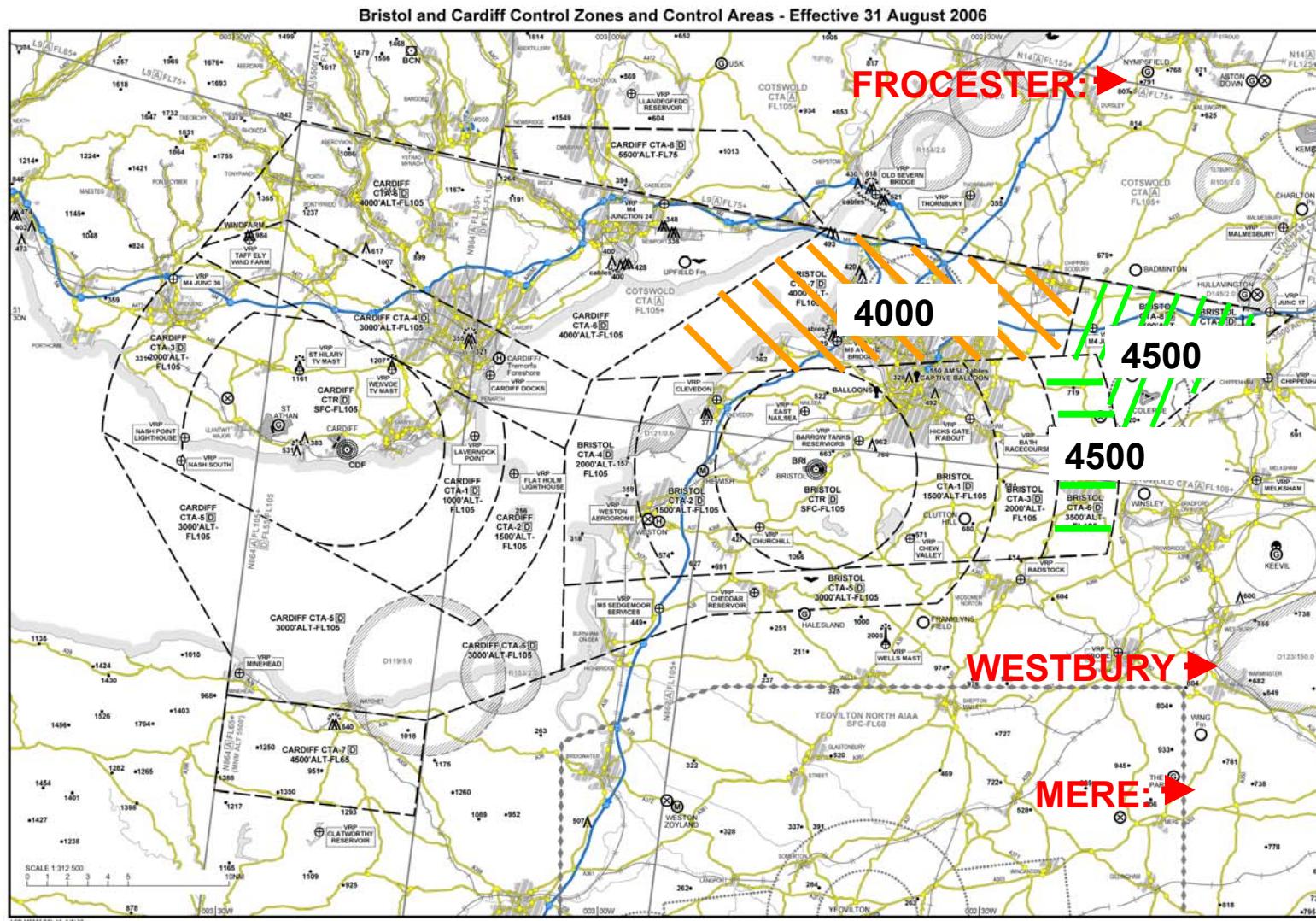
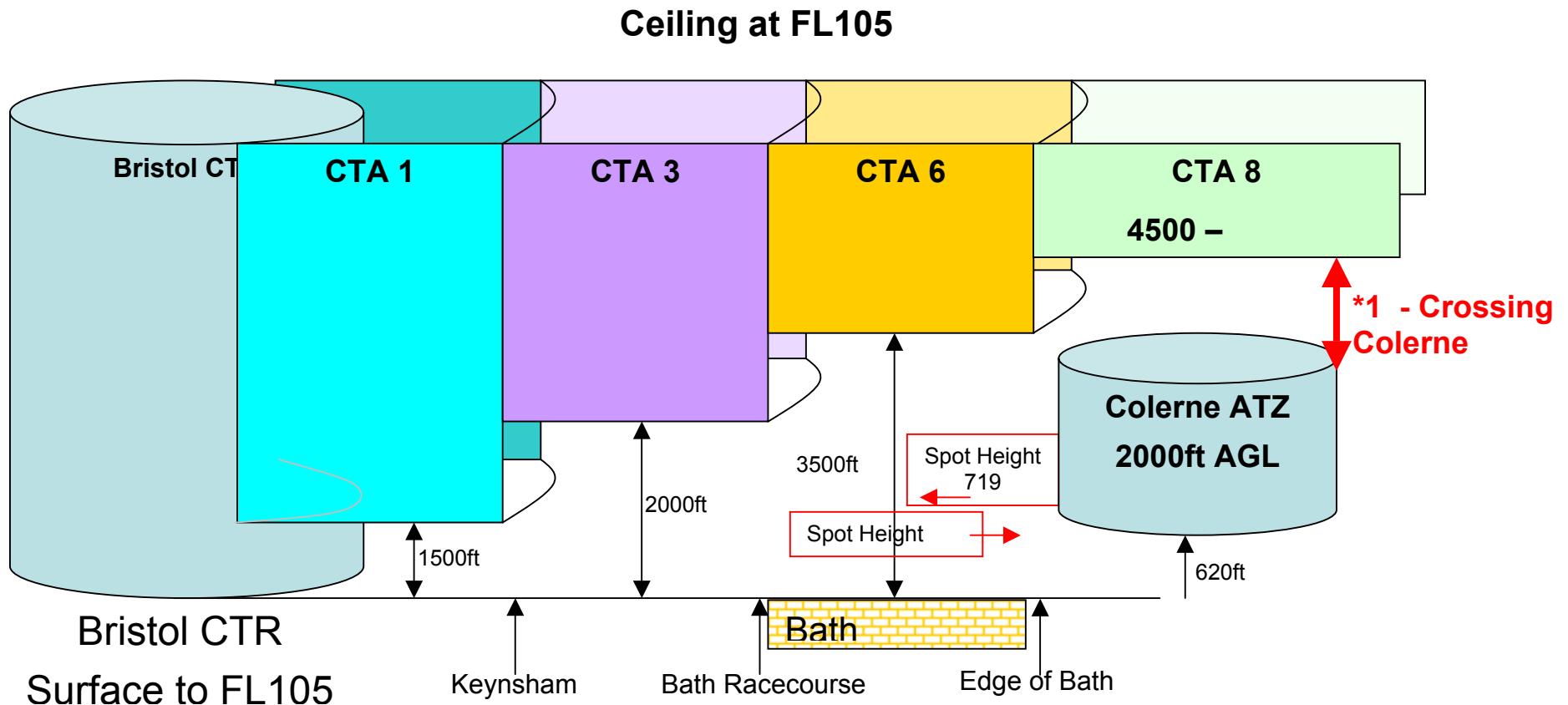


Figure 3 – Airspace blocks – GAP OPEN



***1 - Crossing Colerne only has a GAP of less than 2000ft. (Top of Colerne ATZ approx 2620ft amsl)**

Figure 4 – Airspace in profile – GAP CLOSED

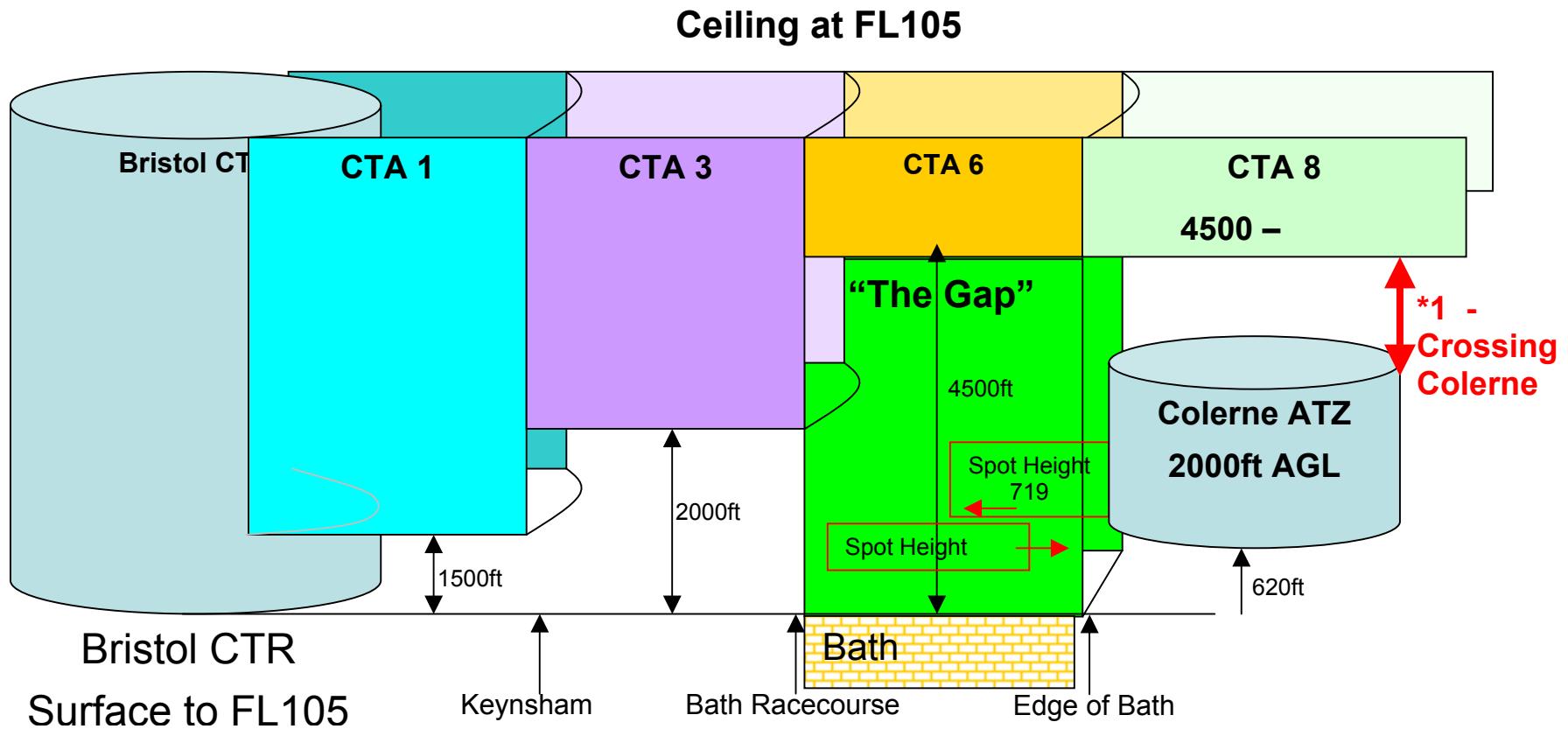


Figure 5 – Airspace in profile – GAP OPEN

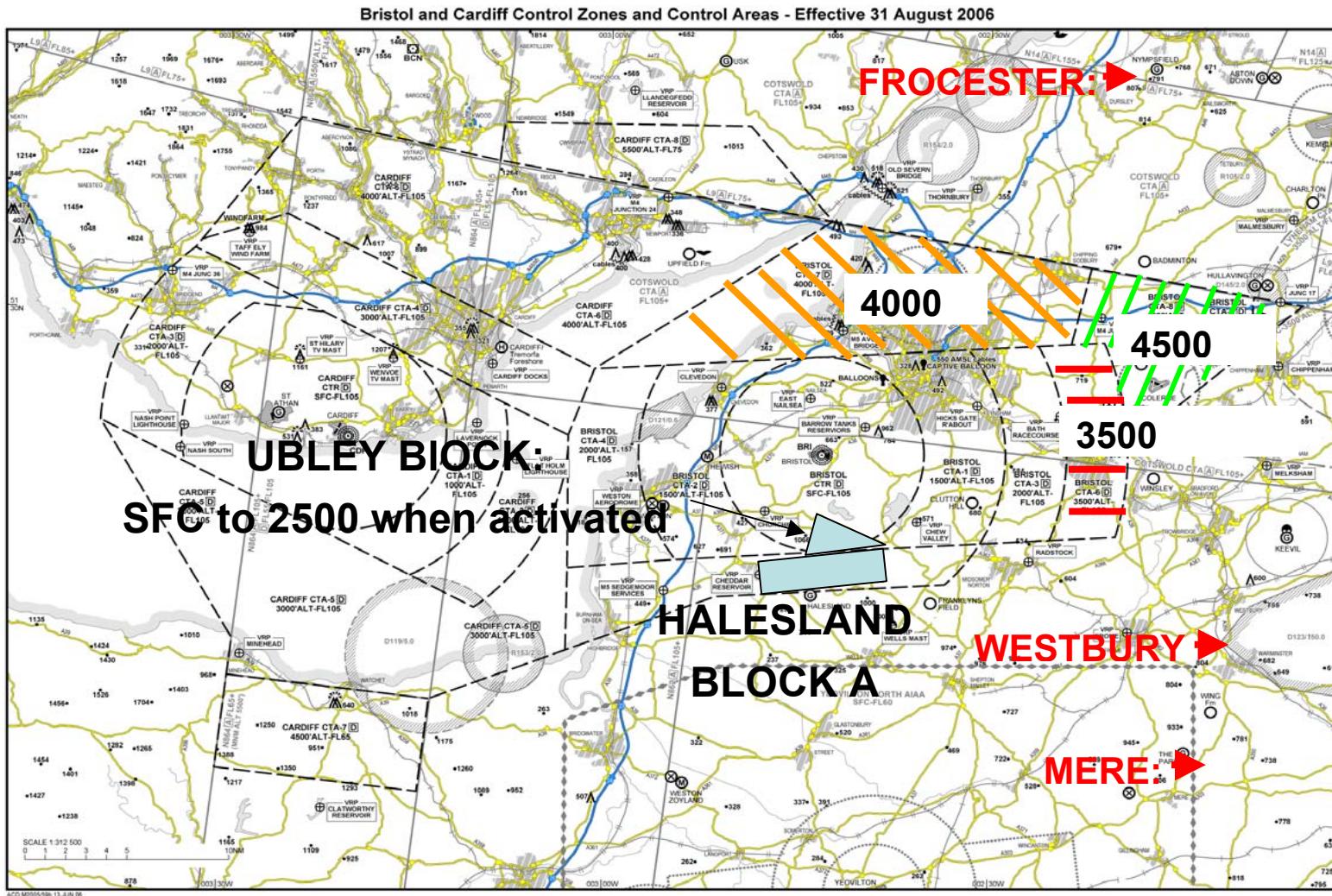


Figure 6 – Ubley and Halesland

PG Tips

Just one uncomfortably large tip this month. But consult a club coach or your instructor if you're in any doubt that you can apply the advice safely.

There's been a lot of talk in the club recently about how to launch in strong conditions without getting dragged, and without getting lifted and dumped when you try to stop the wing overflying by applying the brakes. The first thing to do is to ask yourself if you should be flying at all – other people might be flying, but ask yourself if the conditions are right for **you**.

If you do decide to launch, the Mitsos technique may help. Also called "A's and C's" this has recently found favour in the club with Aspen pilots because the Aspen is rather keen to get flying, especially in strong winds. But the technique works on many other wings. (It might not suit some wings – try it in a safe place in moderate winds to find out if it works for yours.) Bruce Goldsmith describes the method at <http://www.flyaboveall.com/mitsos.htm>, but I think my explanation below is clearer (but then I would, wouldn't I!).



It's not as confusing as it looks!

Photo: Graham Richards

To prepare to launch:

- Get into your normal reverse-launch position, with risers crossed, and with your brake handles in your hands – left brake in left hand, right brake in right hand (i.e. the correct hands for when you're flying). You never let go of these from now on.
- With the left brake handle still in your left hand, grab the shackles at the top of the C risers with your left hand, using a palm-down grip. You need to make sure you have put your hand under the B's and over the D's when you do this, so that it's between the B's and D's when the wing inflates. (That's where the C's are, so that's where your hand needs to be.)
- With the right brake handle still in your right hand, grab the shackles at the top of the A risers with your right hand, using a palm-up grip.

I suppose if you're left-handed, you might prefer to hold the A's with the left hand and the C's with the right. It makes no difference.

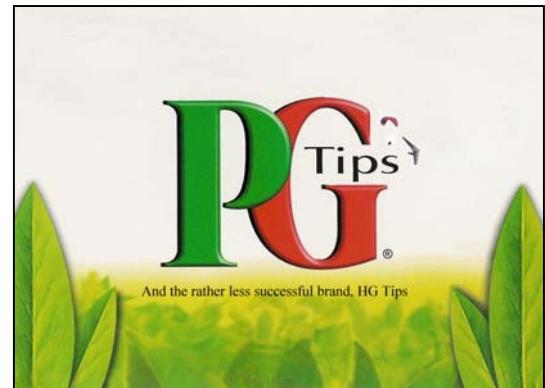
To build the wall, do the following:

- Lean back to tension the risers, and help the A risers up a bit. (Don't pull them towards you, though.)
- As the wing inflates and the wall builds, stop it from going too far by pulling the C's towards you.
- Repeat these two steps until you have a nice wall. If things get out of hand just pull the C's hard towards you.

To launch, do the following:

- Lean back to tension the risers, and help the A risers up. (Don't pull them towards you, though.)
- As the wing lifts, control the rate at which it comes up by pulling the C's towards you. If the wing doesn't come up straight, or things get out of hand, just pull the C's hard towards you to kill the wing.
- When the wing is stable overhead, let go of the risers, rotate, and launch as normal.

The palm-down grip on the C risers makes it much easier to pull down forcefully if you want to kill the wing.



Trailing edge tucked under

Photo: Graham Richards



You'll probably find that when you're using the C's to control the rate at which the wing comes up, you don't need to pull on them much at all.

Bruce Goldsmith says that you can correct a wing that is going off to one side by moving the C risers to one side. I expect you can, but I've never tried very hard. I prefer to just drop the wing and try again.

The technique is also good for wings that show a tendency for the trailing edge to float up when you're building the wall (ah, that Aspen again!). You just pull on the C's and take a step back. This tucks the trailing edge underneath the wing, stopping it from floating up. **Richard Danbury**

Tally Ho! Talybont unseats its rider.

Rod Taylor recounts an unforgettable flight in the Brecon Beacons. He's going to take his mummy with him when he goes flying in future.

It was the BCC on Saturday 2 July and I had just struggled for the first time to the top of Talybont, and had to wait a few hours at the top due to high winds. I was very keen to do well as part of the team, as a couple of weeks before I had failed to get away from the hill.

After about five botched attempts at a high wind launch I finally got into the air, and then boated around the ridge for ages looking for lift but never getting more than 500ft a to.



Talybont toys with its victim on launch

Photo: Richard Danbury



So I went back over the top to the bowl behind. Another glider was trying to get height there, but I arrived above it and gale hung in the bowl until gaining height above the ridge (how many clues do I need?). I remembered someone telling me about leaving the hill low and gaining height on the next ridge, so I turned and ran for it. I cleared the spine back ridge but got pushed down, and then all hell let loose. My glider pitched, yawed and collapsed about half a dozen times and I went into free-fall. The ground was coming up, my wing was thrashing about, and then after about 4 hours (seconds) I remembered I had a reserve. I went for it but couldn't find the handle (when they find my body they are going to say, "what the hell was he doing there," I thought). My wing opened again, still buffeting about, but I was flying! I fought with it (probably against it) all the way to the ground.

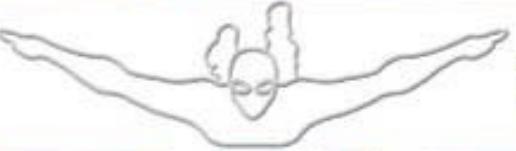
I landed without a scratch, and had not become just another statistic.

I know where I went wrong, and so do you. But in the heat of a comp all my training just went out of the window.

Lesson learner I hope.

See you on the hill,
Rod

PS. Maybe we should practise going for the reserve just like an emergency stop in the car and make it second nature, because had it not been for the excellent wing I was on you would not be reading this. (The parachute repack sessions that take place in the spring give a good opportunity to practice this, especially the ones where a zip-wire is available. Ed.)



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Caption competition

Last issue's photo was of Ken Wilkinson reclining in Bir. There were many entries, and Rich Harding deserves a medal for the sheer number of his. But after hotly contested voting by the committee, the best entry was judged to be by Alan Russell:

"That's it, Ken, just open your legs a bit wider and when it sticks it's head out I'll hit it with the frying pan."

Well done Alan!



The other entries were:

"Despite a lending hand Ken's attempts to produce his own thermals were unsuccessful!" – **Cathy Lawrence**

"Ken (aka "Biggles Wilko roger and out") Wilkinson Flies Undone." - **Richard Hellen**

"Don't put your hand near that! When I put my finger in, it bit me!" – **Richard Danbury**

"No flies on me then!" – **Rod Taylor**

Photo: Mike Humphries

And the following from **Rich Harding**:

"Ken was rudely awakened from dreaming of a seamstress with somewhat less bodily hair."

"Cor, that tea's strong stuff!"

"Bloody hell, John, you never give up, do you?!"

"Ken found the flights in India so long, he'd adapted his Camelbak for dual use."

"Ken trusted Staff completely until the incident with the second class ticket."

And yet more from **Rich Harding**, who assumes the hand is Dr Mike's:

"Trust me, I'm your GP!"

"No, you're only one inch dilated at the moment, love."

"Do you get that on the NHS in India, then?"

Here is this issue's photo. Here Graham Richards rounds off a day's flying in Piedrahita by trying to impress the Spanish waiter with his linguistic skills while simultaneously inhaling "flan".

Send your entries to editor@avonhqpg.co.uk. If you don't, I'll come after you!



Photo: Richard Zaltzman

Diary of Events

August 26-28 Blorenge Party, Pen-y-Worlod Farm, Abergavenny.

September 1-3 The Mere Bash. This is the premier event of the 2006 season. Don't miss it!

September 8-10 Homegrown Festival, Fforest Ffields, Powys.

Club contact list

Role	Name	Home	Work	Mobile	E-Mail
Chairman	Richard Zaltzman	0117 949 0490	0117 925 3456	07776 131090	chairman@avonhqpg.co.uk
Treasurer	Stafford Evans	01225 404063	01373 823737	07748 145712	
Membership Secretary	Andy Bailey	0117 979 3326			membership@avonhqpg.co.uk
Social Secretary	Cathy Lawrence	01985 214579		07799 776260	socialsec@avonhqpg.co.uk
Sites (Overall)	Tim Pentreath	01225 832922		07905 271114	sites@avonhqpg.co.uk
Sites (North)	Robin Brown	01453 827202	01453 827202	07973 844449	sitesnorth@avonhqpg.co.uk
PG Safety	Richard Hellen	01453 548724		07969 819505	safety@avonhqpg.co.uk
PG Competitions	Ken Wilkinson	0117 962 0455		07792 833991	pgcomps@avonhqpg.co.uk
PG Low Airtime	Iain Mackenzie	01225 314655		07702 020886	pbla@avonhqpg.co.uk
HG Safety	Tony Moore (Also Neil Atkinson)	01985 214579		07775 692309	hgsafety@avonhqpg.co.uk
HG Competitions	Neil Atkinson	01264 323813		0773 331 2852	hgcomps@avonhqpg.co.uk
HG Low Airtime	Neil Atkinson	01264 323813		0773 331 2852	hbla@avonhqpg.co.uk
Nova Editor	Richard Danbury	01761 221731		0787 668 1397	nova@avonhqpg.co.uk/ editor@avonhqpg.co.uk
Webmaster	Rich Harding	0117 983 1782 or 00 31 346 354454	0117 983 1782 or 00 31 346 354454	07966 491138	webmaster@avonhqpg.co.uk/ news@avonhqpg.co.uk/ galler@avonhqpg.co.uk
Librarian	Amy Stanton	01761 451323		0772 939 2405	library@avonhqpg.co.uk