



NOVA

The Magazine of the Avon Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

If undelivered please return to:

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May 2007

On the cover: Paul Whatley examines his donkey-leg.

Editorial

A rainy Sunday in May might normally be a reason to feel a little downcast. But not for me! It gives me a much-needed opportunity to spend the day in front of a computer doing much cutting and pasting, and wrestling with the slippery beast that Microsoft is pleased to call a desktop publishing application. What You See Is certainly What You Get, but it's not always what you want.

Anyway, hopefully there will be another rainy day soon which will give you all the opportunity to read the mag. It's much better than flying you know!

My thanks go to all the contributors who have come up with the goods without much badgering from me this time. In fact, this time I have been keeping a rather low profile because work has been keeping me more than busy, and a PC crash didn't help matters. So I hope the authors will forgive me if I omitted to say thanks for the articles at the time.

We've got a good collection of interesting articles this time, and the ever-important theme of safety has not been forgotten. Sarah Ward has written a piece in which she awards herself a "dumb rating" for all the outlandish things she has done in her flying career. It must sometimes be difficult for a newcomer to the sport to "tune in" to the fine line that lies between unnecessary risk and being over-cautious. Sarah's article is great for anyone whose line is way off on the high-risk side – if you're one of those rare people, take a leaf out of her book; she's done it and since realised what serious risks she was taking. She was lucky in that she didn't hurt herself badly, but you may not be so lucky.

Richard Hellen, safety officer to the stars, has also brought us some food for thought, and we recently had some more help in fine-tuning our "caution-line" at the broken-bones club evening, where we saw how novices and experienced pilots can all come to grief for a whole host of reasons. Hopefully we can all learn from their mistakes, and there's a small reminder in this issue in the form of a photo of Chris Harland's wobbly pelvis.

Moving away from safety, Paul Whatley tells us about his conversion from paragliding to hang gliding. As I said, moving away from safety...

Also in this issue is some news about the news. It turns out that Nova's editorial content is regarded as a source of the highest authority and integrity by no less than a political party. See elsewhere in this issue for details of how Nova has far-reaching consequences in the world of politics. However, this does highlight the fact that readers should retain a degree of caution and scepticism when reading Nova. After all, none of the editorial content of this magazine is actually true. Including that last sentence.

Richard

Chairman's Chunter

Spring is well and truly sprung, the skies have showed signs of blue and fluffy white potential, and by some miracle we had four flyable days over the Easter Bank Holiday. I am not the sort of person who keeps records of these things, but I'm sure that someone who does might be able to conjure up some statistics to prove that four flyable days over a bank holiday in early April is an extremely fortuitous event that only ever occurs in the year of the Pig when the Moon shines out of Uranus.

It was also great to be back in the air. Having been jealously watching the flying diary fill up since February, it was with a pleasant mixture of excitement and a touch of nerves that I shook the cobwebs out of the wing on the top of Pandy and took off for the first time in eight months. A very enjoyable few hours later, and the bug was well and truly back. Once again I am checking Weatherjack daily, and desperately trying to juggle aside commitments on weekends wherever possible. Luckily none of my friends are careless enough to try to get married in the summer this year, an event that is guaranteed to deliver flyable weather and therefore make for a day of boring people you don't know into submission with diatribes on the subject of how thoughtless it is to get married in the summer, and how bloody marvellous it would be to be tucked up under the bubbly cumulus floating overhead instead of wandering about in a big tent eating deep fried prawns on sticks.

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.avonhgpg.co.uk

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Getting back in the air after a pretty long layoff made me realise what I had been missing over the winter. Keeping half an eye on the Yahoo group also reminded me that we have a lively group of pilots in the club who are passionate about all aspects of the sport. From stealth flying at the site that we can not name for legal reasons, to controversial videos that disappeared faster than a plate of biscuits at Fat Camp, you are all very busy one way or another!

All of this hyperactivity and it's only May. Now that it is lashing down again and you'd only win on the Weatherjack lottery if you picked a full house of 1s, we get a brief opportunity to think about a few of the things that could affect us. Firstly our public image. Unfortunately, your average man on the street does not know the difference between a paraglider and the round thing he was dragged over the sea with when he went to Marbella on a stag do, let alone a paraglider and a speed glider or paramotor. Not only that, but he (that's our man on the street again) probably thinks we're all dangerous nutters, and his life would be a lot more comfortable if he felt that actually he was not missing anything by spending every Saturday clad in £70s worth of shiny merchandise drinking fizzy disco juice and shouting at a plasma screen in the pub.

A couple of things cropped up recently that we probably all need to think about. The first was the speed riding video shot on the White Horse at Uffington that popped up on YouTube. In case you have not seen it, a couple of blokes take their speed wings up to the White Horse and blat off. In the process they run straight over the horse itself, and then whoop their way down the hill. Why does this bother me? Because there is a fat, tar-covered brush out there that could well splash us as it is wielded at the people who are trampling over a site of special scientific interest, where flying has specifically been prohibited in the past, and at the same time jeopardising the delicate negotiations to get permission to fly there.

The second thing is understanding the fine line we tread to keep our sites open. I know that I crap on about this quite a bit, but that is not just to save on having to write new stuff for the chunter. On the one hand we fly at the discretion of the land owners, and we need to maintain excellent relations with them wherever possible. We do this extremely well thanks to the sterling efforts of our

sites officers, and have a long history of flying in happy harmony.

However, every now and then something goes awry and we lose a site. This happened back in 2001 at Ubley, where we agreed to a voluntary suspension due to foot and mouth and then tree planting. In this case, it appears that our willingness to comply has actually done us a disservice, and that the landowners may not be the nice, reasonable fellows we thought they were. Having been flying there since the '70s we are in a way part of the landscape, and it may actually be harder than the current owners think to deny us access. So in this case, instead of total compliance and going out of our way to be nice, we may need to stand up for ourselves to re-establish our right to fly. Before you go and storm the barricades, we are taking careful steps to understand our legal position, and also to try to negotiate with the land owners and their agents. However, good old Worro is fighting the cause from another corner (teachers really do not have enough to do!), and if we do get the cold shoulder we will see where the caped crusader will get to.

And to end on a happy note, it has been a very safe Spring! Well done everyone for not hurting yourselves in a significant manner. There was one accident reported on TV of a hang glider crashing at Maes Knoll, but we have not been able to track the pilot down, and have had to conclude that either he was flying a Doodlebug or similar, or he'd bought a Clubman from eBay and was having a go. Given that the forecast for the day was directly over the back of the hill, and the site is pretty much unsoarable at the best of times, the eBay option seems like a good one. Just in case you are that pilot, and are a club member reading this with Nova propped open on your plaster cast, please do get in touch with our safety officer.

That is more than enough from me, enjoy the summer fun when this rain clears and keep your eyes open for those things that might make the man in the street look up from his pint of fizzy pop and think "that looks dangerous, it should be banned".

Safe flying,

Richard.

News

Nova on the BBC!

In a surprising development, recent weeks saw Nova featured in the BBC news. The cause was a furore surrounding our very own Chairman, whose name, for reasons that will become clear, will not be mentioned here.

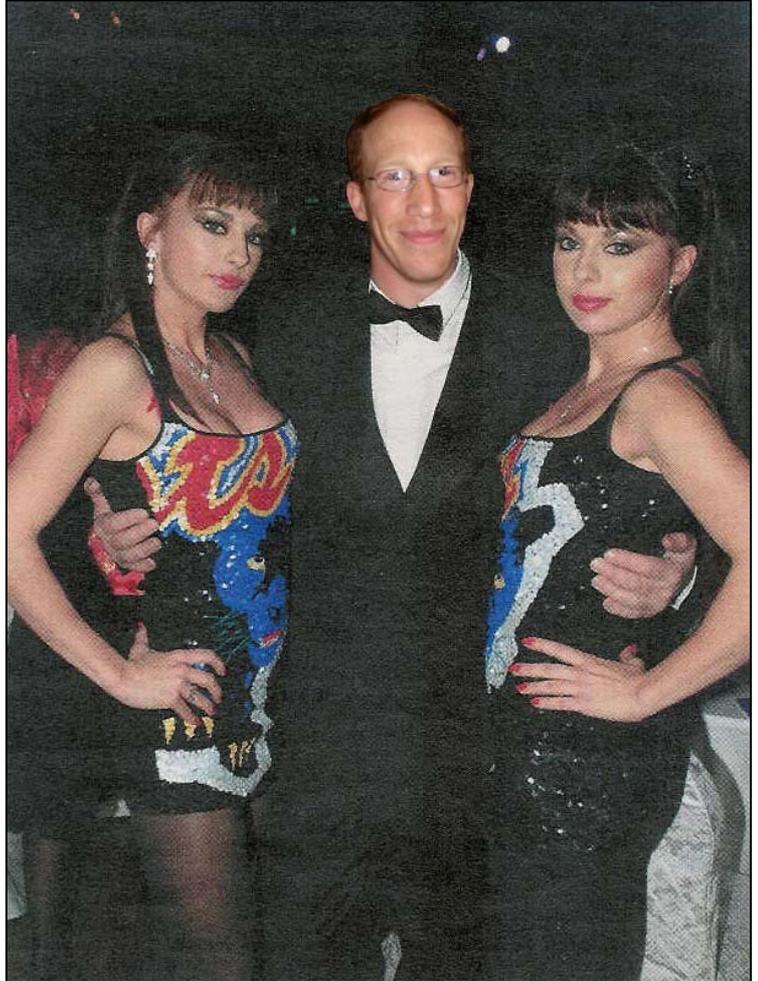
Readers may remember the November 2005 issue which heralded Our Great Leader's accession to his present exalted position. At the time Nova's journalistic commitment to uncovering the truth had resulted in some less-than-savoury revelations about his personal habits.

Eighteen months later the all-powerful force of Google has come into play. It appears that a Google search for the Governor's name turns up that very issue of Nova, and homes in on those very revelations.

Readers may not know that the Big Boss' ambitions to political office do not stop at chairmanship of our humble club. He has recently been sparring with the Liberal Democrats for control of Bristol City Council. In a desperate bid to gain the upper hand it was a simple matter for the Lib Dems to do a search, and report the resulting shocking allegations to the local media.

Clearly feeling that he had suffered damage in the eyes of the electorate, our would-be councillor has sought to raise his profile in a most positive manner. Late night revellers in Bristol can hardly have failed to notice him escorting Monica Irimia, one half of twin-sister performing duo the Cheeky Girls. A source close to the scene told Nova "His public standing has been boosted enormously by his association with the Transylvanian Twins".

Nova's acute sense of responsibility precludes it from causing further embarrassment to our Head Honcho, so all names (except that of Lembit Opik MP) have been expunged from this article.



The Big Cheese, with Monica (right) and Gabriela Irimia, the popular music duo from Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

More scope for upward scudding at Upton Scudamore

The club has recently reached an agreement with the Senior Army Air Operations Officer Salisbury Plain, which allows us to clip the far westernmost part of the danger area.

In the map below, the shaded green area to the west of the A350 and the road heading south from it is now OK for us to fly in. Any further east than this line is strictly off limits. The organisers of the national XC league are aware of this agreement.

Tim Pentreath says "I know it doesn't look like a great deal has been gained, but it is about 700m and so it might just make a difference if you're trying to squeeze round it. Had there been another easy

navigational landmark 500m east of the road we might have been able to swing it a bit further, but it was felt important to have an easily identifiable ground feature to navigate by."

The sites guide will be amended, and the club website will be updated in due course. See below for pictures that show the area in question.

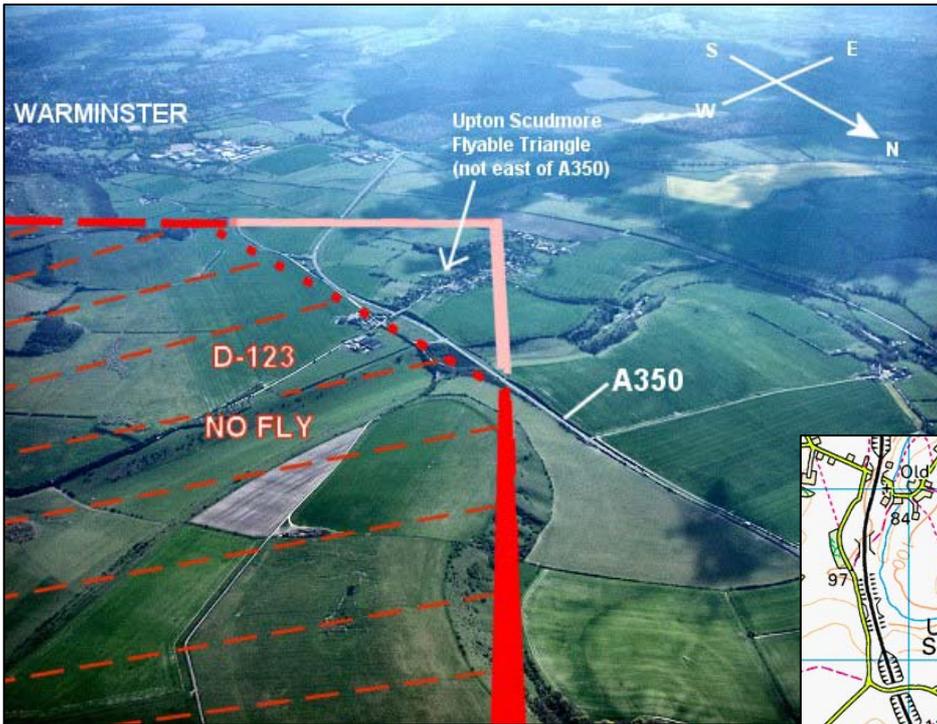
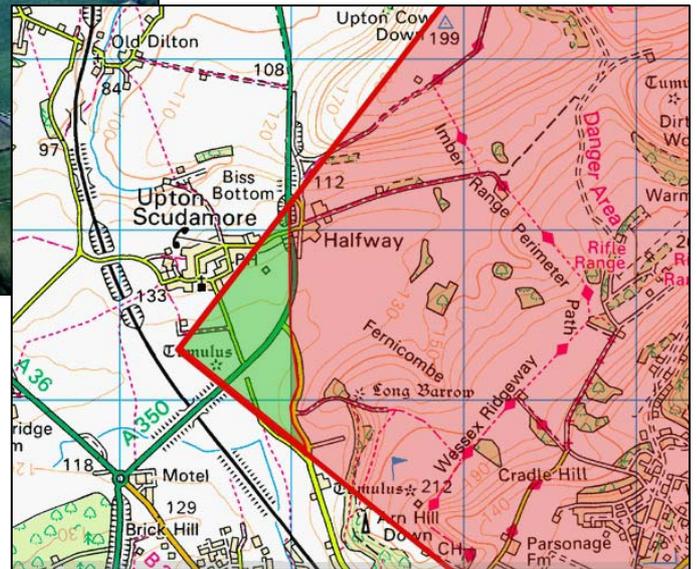


Photo and graphics: Sarah Ward



Graphics: Tim Pentreath

Recent club meetings

We have had some excellent club meetings recently. In March we had a "broken bones" evening, where Phil Sladen, Nick Perkins, Pete Douglas, Steuart Padwick, Chris Harland and Brent Pullen all talked us through incidents they have had, and the injuries they suffered as a result. Richard Hellen also talked about Morgan's crash at Frocester last year.

Phil Sladen's comment is one that sticks in the mind. He was asked if his breathlessness after his crash was due to a punctured lung. He said no, it was just because he "was flattened against the ground by the impact". Oof!

Some of the speakers had had their accidents when they were inexperienced, and others when they were very experienced indeed. It was clear that nothing makes you immune from having a crash, but hopefully we can learn from the experiences of others and make it less likely.

In April Dave Snowden told us about his adventures in the Karakorum Range. He had some spectacular photos taken during flights where he reached altitudes of 7000m. He plans to return to fly K2, and asked if anyone wanted to join him. What are you waiting for?

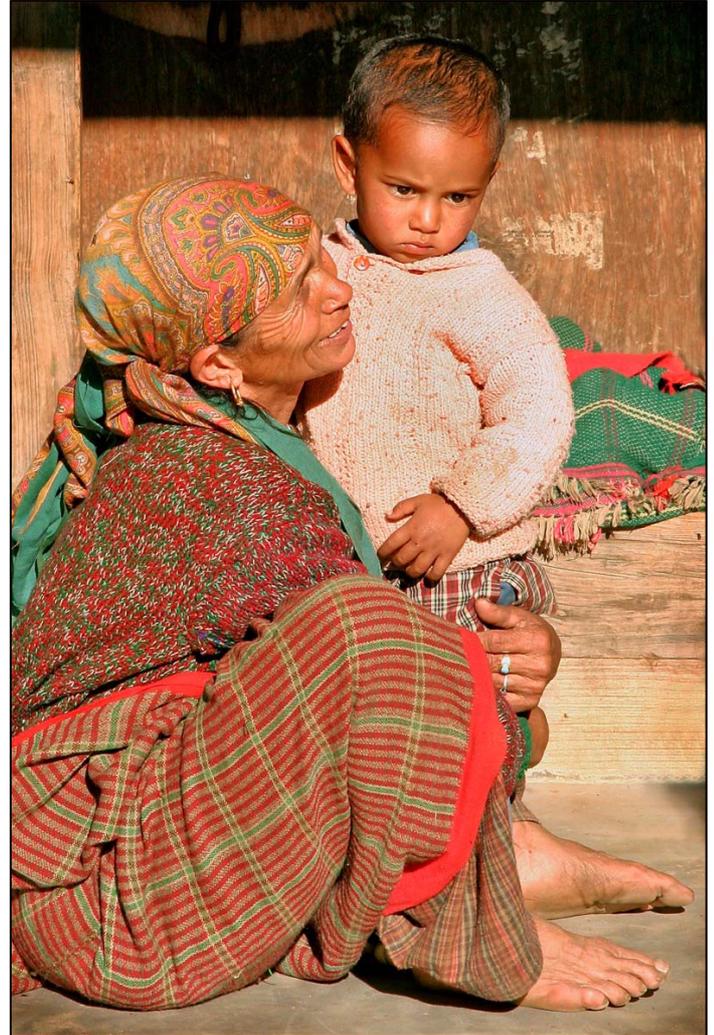
At the most recent meeting in May we had no fewer than two speakers. The first, Peter Cook, gave us the benefit of his internet research on free flight, and talked a little about first aid. The second, John Stennard, gave a fascinating talk about indoor model flying. He brought along several fixed-wing and rotary-wing radio (and infra-red) controlled models which he proceeded to demonstrate with great skill in the confined space of the meeting room at the Compass Inn. Perhaps the highlight was an aeroplane weighing little more than 3 grams! He was also able to give a preview of models soon to be launched onto the market, including dog-fighting helicopters!



Chris Harland goes into a darkened room and shows us his pelvis

Martin Nichols finally snaps

Last year Martin travelled the world with his wing and a camera, and the photos of his experiences are on show at the RUH in Bath until 2 June. Here are a couple of his images.



This photo shows a women and child, taken at Naggar. Martin was surveying take-off sites when he met a group of women collecting wild grass to feed their animals.



This is Mist Trail in Yosemite National Park, California. Suffering for his art, Martin got very very wet, soaked his camera, and his gammy leg seized up when he got to top. When he had completed the 3000ft of painful descent, he discovered that he had pain killers in his backpack all along.

A Foray On The Dark Side

Paul Whatley gets his hands on a stiffy...

Of course I hold Nev Almond entirely responsible. Chris and I were on Westbury when we heard the whistle of what we thought was a sail plane overhead. We looked up to see Nev's ATOS making a head long dash for the top landing field, and I was struck by a profound sense of longing.

A few months later, I attended Graham Phipps' talk on hang gliding training at a club meeting. Graham's talk was not the slickest of affairs but I was impressed by his manner - frank and to the point. I remember, there were long debates about the relative merits of the stiffy and floppy. You probably have your own opinion about their relative safety and convenience. There was discussion about the cost of new and second hand gliders, but it was Graham's enthusiasm for winch training that got my attention. I was captivated by the prospect of potentially being let loose on an ATOS without having to endure the vagaries and back breaking slog of hill training that I had briefly experienced as a teenager.

The summer arrived, I got a few good paragliding flights and apathy took hold. It took the prospect of a business trip to the US in September, for me to consider the possibility of cheap training. A few phone calls later I had discounted the option on the basis of relatively poorer weather in Florida in September, limited available time off and the clincher, being informed by Tony Moore that "they don't train you to land until the end of the course". The possibility of only partially completing my training in the States and then being forced back to square one on my return to the UK was a concern.

The winch training options were Cornwall Hang and Paragliding School (CHAPS) or Airways in Derbyshire. Derbyshire would have been easier to get to but Graham was highly recommended and I preferred the more intimate environment of the small school. So Chris and I booked a week's holiday in August and packed the tent.

Graham has three registered tow fields on the north coast near Godrevy Point. My first day was spent in what we came to know as the Stubble Field. It is the largest of the



three and takes a westerly or easterly. The sea cliffs are only the other side of a road that runs down its northern edge and so it can get turbulent in a Northerly.

I shared the day with a couple of training paragliders and a hang glider pilot on a refresher.

I also met Tim, one of Graham's two winch operators. It pays to be respectful to your winch operator, as he holds all the cards, especially in the initial few hops of your training.

The first hour or so was spent being shown around my first training hang glider, a Condor, generally referred to as the 'Condom'. It is oversized to reduce the speed at which it starts to fly. This reduces the amount of running required by the student and, more importantly, the instructor.

The training is progressive. Some into-wind jogs without clipping in, to get a feel for the control pressures. Then tethers are attached and manned by willing conscripts. In light winds Graham literally pulls you into the air but in higher winds less effort is required. This is where the Condom comes into its own. Even so, by the end of the course, I had developed a healthy respect for Graham's work output.

Eventually the winch is attached to the glider by the dubiously named 'Donkey Leg'. This is a semi rigid pole attached to the base of the hang glider king post. A rope is run from the weak link at the end of the winch wire to your harness, back to the wire and then to the end of the 'Donkey Leg'. A catch at the end of the 'Donkey Leg' is released by a wire that runs down one of the 'A' frame uprights, leaving the 'Donkey Leg' swinging around in front of the pilot. This device looks very impractical for

of the winch, after Graham had called for the power to be reduced.

Day two, and the wind was from the North, so to avoid the rotor from the cliff, we move to the Hells Mouth site, christened the Hay Bail Field - on account of the bails in one corner.

During the morning site briefing Graham took great pains to point out that they were a potential collision hazard.



general flying but has the advantage for training of stabilizing the glider attitude during the tow.

The first flights are no more than moon-walks with the winch at barely more than tick over. They provide further opportunity to get a feel for the control forces and Graham starts his tireless pursuit, drumming winch procedure into you.

By the end of the first day I had managed a few hops to 30 feet or so, gliding straight ahead and landing in front

The field was smaller than the Stubble Field but there were potential emergency landing sites in the fields either side.

We were also introduced to Paul, the other winch man, who as it turned out would be on duty for the remaining days of my training. There were two paraglider pilots cramming in some winch launches in preparation for a hill conversion, and another pilot trying out a new glider. I was the only hang glider pilot in training which promised an intense but rewarding day.

I had swapped the Condom for the Mars, a smaller glider with an unimpressive glide ratio, and consequently well suited to a student's first high flights. The training continued in the same progressive manner, with gradual increases in height. I started taking the release by moving my hand between the A frame upright and the release wire and jabbing it out to the right. Going higher still Graham explained that I would have to start flying an S pattern to be able to get in before the end of the field.

It was all going swimmingly, but a few flights later I had my wake up call. I got to the top of a winch, higher and further over the winch than I had been before. It shouldn't have been a problem, I knew what to do, but I froze. Only for a second but it was long enough to put me right at the end of the field. Graham eventually got through to me with a very calm "Don't Panic, turn", and I did. A hard 180 followed by a reversal, leveling out just in time to perform my first belly landing, in front of the winch. It took me a few seconds to pull my self together, before I unhooked and pushed the glider back down the field.

A couple of people congratulated me on handling a difficult situation but in hind sight I realise that my continued good health was largely down to Graham's uncanny ability to find the right words, inflection or tone to penetrate the fog that was my mind. Thankfully the rest of the day went well and I finished with a high flight and circuit to claim 17 flights that day and my EP.

Four weeks later we were back in the Hay Bail Field, rigging the Mars with another student, Phil. We shared the Mars through the day, which reduced my personal flight rate but made for a much less intense day. We were a self sufficient little team, taking it in turns to perform nose wire duties, hang checks or push the glider back whilst the other extracted himself from the octopus like harness. It also meant there was someone to discuss the last flight with.

For my first flight, Graham gave me the option of a low flight to 'get back into it', but I opted to go straight for a high flight and circuit, which I started to regret as soon as I clipped in. Luckily however the flight was uneventful, setting me up for the next two days.

Just as I was starting to get fed up with the Donkey Leg release slapping my helmet at the top of each winch, Graham announced that it was time to convert to the chest release. The Donkey Leg was removed, and a chest release installed on my harness. From now on I would be connected directly to the winch, and would not benefit from an automatic attitude correction. I would also have to perform two releases, in order to prevent the tow line interfering with the control frame. The winch wire is attached by two lines, a short line directly through the control frame and a longer line under it. After an initial winch to 20 or 30 ft the power is reduced and the first release is performed carefully to avoid inadvertently

releasing both lines. There is a short jolt on the line as the extra length is taken up and then the power is fed back in. Initially the first release is a bit nerve racking but you quickly get used to it. Of course the second line is released at the top. On my first attempt I spent a second or two groping for the Donkey Leg release.

By the end of the second day I had converted to a Calypso and was doing 360s and stalls during the down wind leg. I even found time to look at the stunning view over the cliffs. Despite quite a few high level flights I had not noticed until Graham made a point of telling me to check the view. A fantastic way to finish up. As the sun went down I completed the CP exam and I had my ticket.

The next hurdle was the hill conversion. I was told to look for a 15 mph wind and book myself in. By December I was getting worried that I would be too rusty to do a conversion so I booked in for a weekend expecting just to do some tows. I got lucky, the wind picked up on the Sunday, so with a few winches bagged on the Saturday, we headed for Perranporth. This is a lovely cliff site with a useable beach when the tide is out. The takeoff slopes to the cliff edge, which can make landing on a hang glider tricky, but the 15 mph breeze would work in my favour.

Initially I was the only student and so I had Graham's full attention. I had an extensive site briefing while we rigged the Calypso and waited for the tide to go out. Graham gave particular attention to the need to maintain flying speed after take-off, which bits of the ridge to use, the technique for top landing and where to land on the beach if it all went pear shaped.

By the time I came to launch I was very tense and I think it showed. Chris said that after ten minutes, my easing tension was evident in my flying. I know that after take off, Graham had a hard job convincing me to let the bar out. One of the first things you're taught, is to let the glider trim do most of the work. A light touch is required to be able to feel the relative bar pressures and use the trim speed as a reference.

After a long soaring flight under Graham's constant attention, I slipped the glider back behind the landing area and parked it into wind. Gradually the glider lost height until at about 15 ft I pulled the bar in sharply aiming at a spot in front of Graham. As I neared the ground I eased the bar out, dragging my feet to bleed off excess speed, then bringing them forward to take my weight. Graham took hold of the front wires and I allowed the glider to settle on the control frame. Graham shook my hand with a big grin and I felt like a million dollars.

Another student arrived and we shared the glider. I managed another couple of flights, and the landings got easier each time. The hill rating requires that you fly two sites or the same site on different days. January found me back at Perran. I only performed one flight but that was enough to get my hill rating.

It's Good to Talk

Richard Hellen talks some sense about safety

The more we talk about safety, the more safe we become in our beloved sport / pastime / passion of free flying.

Formally we are required to "talk" to the BHPA in the event of an accident or significant near miss, by filling out an Accident Report form. This is a great way of learning because it encourages clarity of communication to share the insights arising with the wider free flying community, allowing underlying trends and issues to be addressed.

But so much more is revealed when we talk directly with our flying friends.

Yes – it's great to share those moments of delight as we leave the hill for the first time, hit five grand and get technical about the latest wing or para toy must-have accessory, but the more we talk about safety, the greater our chance of continuing to talk about these other nice things.

So how many ways can we talk safety? Odd question maybe, but I can think of three.

1. *One to Many*

This tends only to be of interest to arrange formal presentations when the events resulted in broken bones, complete with x-ray pictures showing bits of metal where formerly there were none. The evidence is clear then, the outcome unambiguous and the desire to hear how it happened strong. At our March club meeting we had a clearly valuable session in which those who had suffered such accidents kindly took us through their painful experiences, highlighting their perceptions on what went wrong and what they would do or not do next time.

However, it's not so easy to talk about "almost accidents", near misses or even realisations of what might happen if x and y were to happen together or directly one after the other. There are no scars to show for it. But there are more of these types of circumstances than actual accidents (with or without injury) – so there is a great learning potential waiting to be used. Maybe we could spend time considering such insights together? How about a near miss of the month session at the start of each meeting? Let me or one of the other committee members know if you'd like to "testify" and we can arrange a short slot of time at the start of each meeting.

2. *One to One*

This talk time happens more frequently as those involved have opportunity to discuss this on the hill, preferably soon after it has just happened. So here's a thought, when you find yourself engaged in such a conversation having had, witnessed or simply lent a friendly and interested ear to the teller of the tale, think – should we /

I raise this insight at the start of the next club meeting or get right on it and post a message to our ever valuable Yahoo Group? I for one would welcome it. There have been many interesting accounts on the Yahoo groups which have flushed out some very interesting observations from our more experienced members. So share your concerns about your flying insight as soon as possible after the (non-reportable) event with those who may have seen it, or are simply there on the hill whilst memory is still fresh.

3. *One to Oneself*

This is perhaps where there is best chance of learning from our near misses. We have the internal video of the experience to play back, probably indelibly etched into our memory, provided subsequent concussion has not wiped our short term memory as a result. But of course then it would not have been a near miss; silly me.

So, play the internal video again and again. See what factors led you to the near miss. Decide to add the mitigating measure into your firmware. Discuss it with yourself – it's really is OK to talk to yourself you know. At three thousand feet nobody will hear you anyway – unless you have one of those clever radios that come on when you speak, then there will be some very interested eaves droppers I'm sure. Then talk it through with your friends, especially the flying variety.

And of course – listen. Take time to hear the account of near misses or concerns from others. You will learn from this, or at the very least provide the interest and feedback needed to capture the lesson for the person telling the tale.

Play the internal video of other's experience simply by imagining, get inside the head of the person recounting the accident. Don't just note what they did right or wrong, but get into the root causes; the conditioning factors that influenced them to be in the situation. Say to your self, "If that was me, I would do" And then visualise yourself doing it.

Safety prevention is all about knowledge management which, the text books tell us depends on how it is embedded and engaged within in a "community of users". It has to be living, not gathering dust in a database. Of course writing detailed accounts is a necessary step, especially for the headline accidents. But keeping the safety flame alive through discussion and reflection is essential, even vital.

A final thought on the recording aspect of safety management – local knowledge of our sites is clearly something for which we take collective responsibility. That's why we all readily share our knowledge with newcomers to the site. So, maybe there's something to

be said for the Sites Guide to include a few words on some of the more subtle aspects of the site. Any competent pilot should be able to see the obvious threat posed by the line of trees at the bottom of Selsley. But how many would figure out the fact that the site can be subject to quite nasty wave effects in a strongish northerly wind? Or that mid way back over the common

under such conditions there can be particularly turbulent air – just as you are on your finals, so maybe better to land closer to the edge.

So – let's not get too paranoid about safety, but on the other hand let's have fewer accidents this year than last, which was frankly awful. Maybe we can do this through talking more about safety.

Diary of Events

Spring 07 has been a jam packed fun fest of super speakers and great evenings. We have also packed in pilot training, with the final exams next month.

Below are dates to put in your diary for the rest of the summer. We've got gaps in the schedule for speakers in the autumn, so if anyone has any ideas, please email them to socialsec@avonhgpg.co.uk.

14th June	Club meeting – From plummeting to paragliding: Tom Arnold will be giving a talk on his conversion from dropping out of the clouds to climbing up to them, and his experiences of skydiving and converting to paragliding. His talk includes some videos and plenty of tips on hurling yourself out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft.
14th June	Final revision session and pilot exams.
12th July	Club meeting or summer party. TBD
14th August	Tour of Rolls Royce Aero Engines – it's essential that you let socialsec@avonhgpg.co.uk know if you want to come.
August	NO CLUB MEETING.
1st – 2nd September	The Mere Bash! No excuses, rain or shine this is the party of the year.

If you are new to the club, the club meetings are a great opportunity to meet other members and get advice on flying our sites. We will also be having a regular update on the British Clubs Challenge (BCC) competition at each meeting. For anyone who has not flown in the BCC before, it is a fantastic opportunity to take your first cross-country steps under the wings of our more experienced pilots, and to help you improve your flying throughout the season. Our captain this year is Ken Wilkinson, email comps@avonhgpg.co.uk for more details.

Get the dates in your diaries, and please let us know if there is anyone you would like to hear speak or could persuade to give us a talk.

Cheers,

The Committee!

I Learned About Flying From That...

Want to risk life and limb for your sport? Sarah Ward did, so that you don't have to.

Flying With Trees - Dumb Rating 10/10.

Trees are great! They are the only real three dimensional objects we have when slope flying. For a time I took to flying into them at every opportunity – flying my harness through the tops and my wing tip through the sides. Trees in leaf looked so soft and benign – what harm could come from a meter of wing tip brushing them? Then one day I encountered strong sink and ended up in between several big trees with no clear exit out. This was scary stuff. I had no option but to fly one wing maybe a couple of meters into the softest of the trees and hope. The wing-tip went in and didn't come out. I slowed down and the leading edge folded under leaving 40 percent flying. Just when I should have dropped 60 feet to the ground in a heap it came loose and I was safe to fly away. I never saw the guardian angel on this occasion but I am sure she was there. I learned that trees should be avoided at all times.

Flying With Fog - Dumb Rating 8/10.

Fog is great! Especially when it is on the hill as orographic hill fog. When it began to form one day at my favourite hill I decided to fly it. I had a cheap compass and an altimeter so I was all set! I flew for half an hour in the ever thickening cloud, using imagination and my small compass to fly from one side of the bowl to the other, often surprising people walking on the path as I emerged, ghost-like, from the fog. I heard them yelp and then laugh as they realised it was not a supernatural phenomenon but a dumb girlie on a paraglider. I landed one last time as the fog was really dense and I could not see the hill in time to turn anymore. Standing there, wing above head, I am suddenly lifted up, up into the bowels of the cloud by some gust of wind. So quick, back on compass and fly away from hill to the NW. But my trusty little compass isn't working anymore. The pointer keeps sticking. Why didn't I spend more than £2.99 on it? I managed to get one reading that I trusted, headed northwest and let go the brakes so I would not accidentally start a turn back to the hillside. At 190 feet above the ground I popped out of the fog's base and landed safely, albeit covered in water from the fog. I'm sure I saw an angel in the clag. I learned that things go wrong very quickly in the air.

Flying With Stars - Dumb Rating 5/10.

It was midnight and I was just arriving at my favourite hill! There was a quarter-moon and a heaven's fill of stars. The wind was a steady NW 12 – perfect for night-flying! After carefully checking my wing by feel in the dark I switched on my anti-collision strobe and took off into the darkness. Wow, what a fantastic experience! The air was laminar smooth and I could easily make out the chalk areas around seats on takeoff, the white horse and the dumb-bell shape of the white car-park where I would eventually land. The horizon was lighted through 360 degrees with orange street lights giving me an excellent flying horizon. I leaned back in the harness and watched the starry sky wheel above me as I performed the most gentle turns, like some olden-day sailing ship on a far ocean. After an hour it was time to land and go home. I still had 200 feet ATO when I arrived overhead the clearly visible car-park and gradually descended without forward motion. This sleepy flight was brought to an abrupt end when the ground intervened early! No angel needed. I learned that only owls and apache pilots should fly at night.

Flying With Clouds - Dumb Rating 4/10

I reached the cloud's base at 5,100 feet but wanted to go higher so I simply kept thermalling until, five minutes later, I was 500 feet inside the cloud and seemed to have topped-out. It was about then that I started to seriously listen for aircraft – between the many light planes that use this 'corridor' airspace, and the frequent Herks that operate locally, I decided it might be wise to cut short my little IMC diversion and descend. So I stop turning and whamm... the wing wheels over and dives! Taken by surprise I instinctively go to recover and then stop myself. I seem to be in a spiral dive but remembering my instrument flying days I remind myself to ignore my senses and instead I lift the brakes fully up. Within five seconds the wing is suddenly flying smooth, straight and level and I smile as I realise my senses were fooling me all along. If I'd tried to 'recover' from this false-sense upset, I'd have come out of the cloud in a screaming death spiral. At this point I actually hit turbulence and had to hold the brakes just a little 'on' and trust the wing would fly safe - I clearly couldn't rely on my own perceptions to do that. This is why we don't fly in cloud. I am sure there was an angel nearby somewhere. I learned that clouds have hidden dangers.

Flying With Hills - Dumb Rating Of 10/10.

I was flying directly toward the slope after flying a mile out in a thermal and had got low. Rather than turn onto the slope's direction early on I left it until I was very close intending to do a sharp 90 degree turn 100 feet away from the trees. It was

at this point that I was slapped by a terrific wind gust from behind. It felt like my harness had been kicked and the wing stalled and flew in front of me. And stayed there! I began a death-dive into the side of the hill – face first. Full brake didn't help so I prepared for the impact with a looming tree trunk. I remember thinking that this was unsurvivable and was going to kill me. When my face was two feet from the tree trunk my wing - which had hit the tree-top in front of me – caught and yanked me sideways away from the neck-breaking landing. Hanging upside down from the tree in my harness I had time to think and yes, I did believe in angels. For flying a massively porous wing in spring conditions I give me a dumb rating of 10/10!

BCC Report, 7/8 April 2007

Ken Wilkinson brings us news of the BCC round that was held at Easter

Well the BCC got off to a good start. Normally at this time of year there are loads of cancellations as the weather is just so iffy. Fantastic Easter weather brought everyone out to play. The good forecast meant many went to Llangattock to BBQ (in April!!) and camp.

Saturday 7th April, Bloreng, 8 mph easterly

A very organized Mark Pearson called for open XC as usual, and with an excellent looking sky we all tried to get in the air. Take off was difficult as the wind was off to the south and very light. Richard Westgate was in the Wessex team and he quickly climbed out. What the World Tandem record holder is doing in the BCC is a good question, but the spirit of the BCC is mainly to have fun.

A cycle came through taking Stafford, Rod and myself climbing away with a couple of others. We hit base around 4200ft, and crossed to Blaenavon. From there on it appeared pretty blue, but there were little bits of haze forming, indicating lift. We strung it together for 25km till Rod announced his vario was playing up. He landed for a PB of 27km. Well done! Stafford and me crossed the hills south of Merthyr and got a bit low with Stafford dropping out at about 30km, while I spun it out a bit for 38km. Overall Rich Westgate got 65km (Grrr!!) and Tim Johns 45km. Several others got around the 38km mark. Wessex won the day with us third but it was an excellent start for

the season. Then off to the campsite for an excellent BBQ and beers.

Sunday 8th April, Merthyr, 13 mph

Windier today but an excellent day once you could get away from the crowds. A small gaggle got away initially in a weak climb but they didn't get far. Several Avon pilots climbed out together later (many not in the team) and had a great time floating up to a base of 5200ft. There were some convergence clouds that lead myself and Alex Coltman off to the south over Abertillery. Andre Odinius, Joe Eades and Chris Harland went north to Blaenavon. We eked out lift over Usk to the gliding club for around 37km. Andre did 44km and won the day which also meant he got the Easter (Dave Yeandle) Cup. Stafford, Rod Taylor, Mike Humphries did up to 18km. A solid performance which meant we won the day. Others in the teams were Richard Danbury, Graham Richards, Jon Rose, and Ian McKenzie

As it stands we are third but only a small number of points behind Wessex and SE Wales.

Let's keep this together for an excellent year with the BCC. Maybe we can win it again!

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Caption Competition

We had a bumper crop of captions this time, all of a very high standard. But the winner of the airmap by a fine margin was **Mike Humphries**. Well done Mike!

Here are the others:

- "Corr Lummee, glad I didn't come to Merthyr in my car." **Graham Richards**
- "Shut the f%\$k up Evans boyo, of course I know how to torch a car." **Tim Pentreath**
- Staff: "So what do you put in there then Ken."
Ken: "This is my new water powered engine... only runs on special water from the Welsh Valleys."
Ian: "Ah, I see its a water ballast based car, you fill it up at the top and push it over the edge." **Andre Odinius**
- "Yes Ken, but I still think the RAC are a better option." **Stafford Evans**
- Evans said, "I was only trying to point out the error of their ways your honour." **Stafford Evans**
- "Iain if you piss on it any more we'll never get it started." **Stafford Evans**
- "Yes Ken, I think you're right, no one can see us robbing bits of this Saxo." **Stafford Evans**
- "I'm going to disconnect that darn GPS if it's the last thing I do." **Nick Somerville**
- After patiently waiting for many days Sir David Attenborough's cunning bait finally pays off. The shy, secretive, Ubley Elves are finally captured on film! **Sean Worlock**
- Ken is pleased with his 'free' car on offer from



"The b*****d may have flown to Monmouth but at least I've got his battery... and his wiper blades... and his gear knob..."

Avonhgpg forum. **Mike Rossdale**

- "Well look guys I know it's against site rules but trashing a low airtimer's car always dispels the inconsolable sense of blank despondency and loss after a cancelled task." **Mike Humphries**
- Three members of the Avon committee indulge in their favourite parawaiting pastime. **Mike Humphries**
- "OK so maybe it wasn't a real 2CV they flew off the cliffs at St. Hilaire." **Mike Humphries**
- "Is this your wife's Car Dave?"
"Yep she broke down last night."
"Puncture?"
"Too right, and she deserved it." **Paul Sayers**
- "It'll never pass the MOT - there's no washer fluid." **Rich Harding**
- "Hey, Ken, you could power your van's sound system with that!" **Rich Harding**
- "Right, that's the Low Airtimers safely hoovered backwards to Fochriw, what can we nick?" **Rich Harding**
- "That's as may be, Ken, but the poor bastard only asked us to bump start it!" **Rich Harding**
- "So you teach Car Theft to your Year 10 every week do you Mr. Wilkinson?" **Richard Zaltzman**
- "Tight? Moi? Not at all, it's just there's a decent tax disk holder and at least a pint of washer fluid in there I could have." **Richard Zaltzman**
- "David Bellamy and friends discover the in-fernal combustion engine." **Rich Harding**

And here's this issue's photo, which was taken by Graham Richards at Frocester. Send your entries please to editor@avonhgpg.co.uk.