

North Wales Hang-Gliding & Paragliding Club

Newsletter – Summer 2013



From the Chairman / Editor

No, our Newsletter has not been abandoned! Its publication has just become more spasmodic because of the success of our website Members Form, where most of our day to day news and gossip is published. However, our Newsletters are also accessible for non- members to read on our website and its contents may attract them to our sport and to us as new members. It is therefore in our interest to try to keep it going on a more regular basis. It also serves as a vehicle to carry reports of our AGM, annual accounts and other things which deserve a more permanent place in our records. It used to be a quarterly production, but I'm now hard-pressed to find enough news to make it an annual thing!

This is turning out to be a bad year for club members suffering from their desire to fly. While the season started early and well, in April / May two members suffered life changing flying accidents. One of our more active PG members had a collapse at low level and was pendulumed into the hill. An HG member crashed on landing at the Long Mynd. Both suffered spinal damage. Since then, two other members have suffered injuries while participating in PG competitions, one on the continent and one in UK, resulting in one bruised spine and one broken foot. It has been suggested that lack of 'airfield discipline' may have contributed to the HG crash and this matter is expanded upon in a feature which follows. But we can learn from any causal factors for the other mishaps? All these misfortunes have certainly made me more conscious of the possibilities of injury and as a consequence, more cautious about where and when I fly – and I suspect that many other club members feel the same way. We should all endeavour to learn from accidents that occur in our sport and do all we can to fly safely.

This is the Club's Fortieth Anniversary year, but there seems to be little enthusiasm to celebrate it with a special event. I am hoping that we might be able to dedicate a Club Night later in the year – and perhaps we could arrange an evening meal somewhere ... Ideas?

The Club AGM was delayed by heavy snow at the end of March, and took place at the end of April. A full report and accounts follow in this Newsletter.

News

BHPA Coaching Courses: In the interests of gaining members with this qualification and the added help they can then offer to members, the Club is willing to pay the Course Fee. It is also advised that Coaches retake the course a five yearly intervals in order to keep right up to date.

Parachute Repack: I am planning be another Parachute Repack at the end of January 2014 – final date to be announced. As usual, it will be open to any BHPA member on a ‘first come, first served’ basis.

Features

An appeal for better ‘Airfield Etiquette’

Carl Wallbank

If you are a free flyer, whether on a hang glider or paraglider, please read this, think about it carefully and try to understand that your actions and attitude now and in the future can make a big difference to the safety of fellow free flyers and friends. I've kept quiet up until now but following a recent accident at the Long Mynd - nothing more than a hang glider nosing in, but sadly resulting in very serious injuries – I must have my say.

There are aspects of this accident that reflect long-standing problems - not just in UK, but worldwide - that have been aired on Facebook and other media by unhappy pilots for a long time. It is something that we have all either ignored or turned a blind eye to and we need to act now to stop accidents repeating themselves. With very little effort and at no cost, we can all help to fix the problem: It is simply a matter of ‘airfield etiquette’.

I have many friends who fly Hang-Gliders and Paragliders. I don't like the ‘us and them’ feeling which sometimes prevails. We are all free-flyers sharing the same zest for free-flight: we just fly different *aircraft*. But I shall have to talk about the two types in order to highlight the differences in aircraft performance and requirements - and pilot attitudes.

In gaining our pilots licences we learn good airmanship and how to apply it. I believe that good airmanship starts on the ground and finishes on the ground; the bit in the middle is just one part of it. The flying sites, the top and bottom landing areas we use, are classed as **airfields** and as such, have basic rules to be followed. On busy days, our sites can see more ‘aircraft movements’ than some regional airports, and like such airports, our control of ‘aircraft movements’ has to be through very good airmanship and observing the rules. I suggest to you that this is where we are failing - failing to respect site rules applicable to each other's flying discipline.

All active airfields have aircraft coming and going all day and are ready and able to accommodate their different performances, which are most apparent on take-off and landing. In effect, any aircraft landing or taking off briefly has full control /right of way of the airfield. And of course, an aircraft on landing approach has precedence over any aircraft ready to take off. Our sites should be no different, especially on a busy day.

In our case, one needs to appreciate the construction and performance differences in the aircraft using the airfield. A Paraglider is lightweight, easy to carry, very controllable, has a small speed range and does not suffer ground effect due to design. A hang glider is big, bulky, and awkward to handle and carry on the ground. In the air it has a high speed range and when landing is affected by ground effect for a very long way. They act and fly much more like a conventional aircraft or glider.

Now consider the reality: typically, all the hang gliders are rigged out the way of the take-off edge on top of the hill, or are huddled together to the side of their landing field. They are only carried forward to the take-off edge when ready to launch and are soon airborne, and because of their higher landing speed, invariably land well away from the take-off area. In my experience, when a hang glider sits in the middle of the landing field, it is due to ignorance / inexperience, or to a bad landing and maybe a damaged A-frame. Other HG pilots will shout at him to move to the side or go and assist him to carry his damaged wing to the side. HG pilots do this, the HG's do this because either they have been trained to do it, they have very good airmanship, or their peer's do it so they copy them. Maybe they don't want anyone else landing on their very expensive wings! *The thing is – they clear the runway!*

The paragliding world tends to work differently. Wings are usually laid out, checked and prepared for flight close to take-off from which they are equally quickly launched. For landing, PGs need only a minimal runway: they land slowly enough and with no ground effect that they could all land in close proximity to each other - but are best moved away from the landing area for folding / packing or to be parked. *Vis – clear the runway!*

You can see from the two paragraphs above that our free-flying disciplines are different and we require different things to safely perform our chosen sport. And herein lies the problem: while each discipline maybe acting safely with regards to its own needs, it may not be not respecting the needs of the other discipline. Apart from high level competitions were sites are closed to others, everywhere we fly is a hang glider and paraglider site and as such, our actions on the airfield must respect all users entitled to use that airfield, whether they are present or not.

I am not asking for a major change, just re-aligning our attitude towards safety for all flying disciplines. Whether this attitude is not taught correctly in flying school, is not passed on by our peers, or just gets lost over time as we focus on our own sports safety procedures: or because so few hang gliders are seen on the airfield nowadays - I'm not sure. All I do know is we all share the same sites and thus have to adhere to the rules to protect the safety of all users of that airfield.

I actually enjoy the paragliding world and have thought of taking it up on many occasions. Often nowadays, I get my fuel to perform better in my own discipline from the paragliding world, which is active, enthusiastic and competitive. There are a lot of very hard working and driven individuals in paragliding and their example keeps me focused. I do not want to see any split between our PGs and HGs but I do want to see a better mutual understanding of each other's discipline- something I don't believe the hang gliding world always gets from the paragliding world at present.

I look forward to future flying with you all and we can discuss this as much as is necessary from a safe area on our flying sites.

Club Chairman's response:

Carl Wallbank is one of the country's most experienced HG pilots and I find it hard to find fault with what he has said about the need to improve 'airfield etiquette' at a busy site, mainly because of the differences in flying speeds of the two aircraft we fly. I also accept that it is us paragliders who have the greater need to both appreciate and apply this improvement. There is no great problem at sites used only by PGs / if PGs are the only ones flying or if only HGs are using a site, but flying both PGs and HGs together at the same site does require more consideration and discipline.

Our site at Llangollen is the most obvious one where 'airfield etiquette' could be tightened up, especially on busy days, and I put the following suggestions to you - for discussion by all means, but also for adoption as standard practice.

1. HGs already rig at the back of the field: PGs should prepare away from the take-off edge, e.g. towards the fence to the east, or beside / west of the round pond. Between flights, park you wings in these areas as well.
2. Come to the edge only when ready to take off - and try not to wait there too long for the perfect conditions if others are coming forward to launch.
3. Our 'main runway' is the centre ridge (such as it is) of the landing field and HGs need much of its length to approach and land safely. They will then either carry their wing back through the gate if flying again, or will pack up in the SW corner of the field, towards the style.
4. I hesitate to suggest that PGs should not land on the same 'runway' but if there are HGs in the circuit which may be planning to land, PGs should land further to the north / Dee Valley side of the said ridge line. The main thing then is to clear the landing area promptly and carry you wing towards the quarry / into the take-off field to fold it away.
5. PGs should not routinely plan to land in the take-off field on busy days.
6. Visitors, spectators and picnickers should be told where the take-off and landing areas are and asked to keep clear of them.

I say again: it is all a matter of numbers and mix of aircraft. If we imagine our sites as an airfield, with a runway (which any aircraft once landed has to clear as quickly as possible), taxiways, aircraft parking areas, etc., we allocate and use the land accordingly; it should reduce the risks of incidents and be safer for everyone. Finally, this is not a 'local' bleat: it is also the subject of the 'Attitude' leader in the July 2013 Skywings. As Carl said, it is a problem affecting free-flying worldwide. Let's all do our little bit to overcome it.

Report of Club Annual General Meeting – 29 April 2013

Originally scheduled for 26th March, but postponed due to snowfall in the region.

Club Officers present: Chairman - Jerry Hazzard (JH), Sites - Steve Kynaston (SK), Webmaster - Tim Salter (TS), Membership/Secretary - Ian Home (IH), Social/Newsletter - Jerry Hazzard, Treasurer - Steve Taylor (ST). Four other members were present. Apologies: Steve Hogan (HG Coach), Brian Dillon (PG Chief Coach/Safety), Graham Bullingham.

Chairman's opening address: Jerry opened the meeting at 8.20pm, welcomed everyone and summarised the past year's flying: "Although a wet and windy year followed a wonderful March, 2012 produced 880km of XC flights achieved by 11 members. Once again congratulations in particular to Graham Cummins who flew one third of this total distance. The 15th April 2012 will go down in club history as the day that Carl Wallbank flew to a new UK open distance record of 280km from Llangollen to Weymouth. Bob Little reached Shrewsbury and Myles Kynaston reached Bath. Congratulations to them all. He added that it would be interesting to know how many hours members flew in any one year – but no process exists for recording this!

2012 was generally a safe season: a few bumps and scrapes but those involved are still flying. We can all learn from others' mishaps and take every care to ensure that our flying in 2013 will be safe.

On the admin side all is well with our flying sites and relationships with our site owners. However, costs of site fees and rewards given in lieu of fees have risen over the years. Our membership numbers are good and our finances sound. We have excellent communications among members, and we are usually told exactly what the weather is going to do when we wish to fly! The club is healthy in all respects, thanks to the good work of your committee. My sincere thanks go to all members of the committee for their help and support, according to their various responsibilities. It is good to know that they are willing to remain in office for at least another year – but we should encourage some of our younger members to get involved in running the club. After all HGPC in our title stands for more than 'Healthy Geriatric Pensioners Club'.

In this current year the weather hasn't been that good so far, but the paragliding XC season has started. Steve Taylor and Paul Burke were first to go on 2 March and about 2 weeks later Stu Lloyd flew back to his home from Moel Famau with Graham Cummins following him home for a cuppa soon after.

More XC flights have been made in April, but the unfortunate news of Stu Lloyd's accident at Llantysilio on 20th April has put a dampener on things. He is due to spend the next six weeks in hospital at Gobowen, but I am told that he is now feeling more comfortable and more mentally positive.

Finally, many thanks to those who nominated me for a BHPA Award of Merit, which I was honoured to receive at the BHPA AGM in Nottingham in early March. It was a very pleasant surprise and honour – or was it just a ploy to keep me grounded on the best flying day of the year so far! But I still want to pass the Chairmanship on to a younger member within a year or two at most! Who is willing to step up to the mark? Once again, my thanks to you all for your help and support."

Minutes of the 2012 AGM: These were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

Reports from Club Officers - Membership / Secretary: IH reported that our current paid-up membership is 125 of 123 at the last AGM. Following a January email campaign to 17 lapsed members there were 5 renewals. There were 6 new members over the past 12 months, and 4 members left the sport or the area. Some 19 members' subs have currently lapsed, not including those who are recovering from operations or injury. This subs lapse most commonly results from credit cards expiring and so Paypal payments failing. Clive remarked that to avoid card expiration it is possible to nominate your current account as the primary source in Paypal.

Our annual check with the BHPA, which is required as part of re-registering the club (confirming club officials, club description), was carried out in showed that five club members needed reminders to renew their BHPA memberships.

Two of these subsequently emailed that they had left the sport, so just three people remain to give me a reply and get themselves covered for third-party liability insurance. I'm disappointed that these people haven't replied to my emails as I was very gentle with them. Clive suggested that a better response might be forthcoming from a polite letter to each.

A concern expressed by your committee about being able to check current BHPA membership on the hill means that members should always carry their BHPA cards with them when going flying.

Entry forms were available for the August 2013 Worthing Birdman competition flown from the end of Worthing pier into the sea - for anyone interested.

Sites Officer: SK reported that all is well with our site landowners. Following a wet 2012 some care is required at Llangollen when parking in the field to choose a dry section near the path to take-off. If tree-planting were ever proposed below our take-off field at Llangollen then site owner Emyr would let us know. Moel Accre and the Gyrn can both be driven up with care. Gyrn site owner Jack is happy for 2- or 4-wheel drive vehicles to be driven up to take-off.

SK said that Doug Jones had carried out the 'whiskey run' sites for the Clwydian sites and had provided him with an update of site owner's names and addresses, etc. JH understood that there were no problems with coastal sites (BD not present to report).

The Joint Forces Club has again asked to use our sites for their annual competition, should they be the best option according to weather on the day. Approval has been given.

Coaching & Safety: No formal report given as both senior coaches were absent. Committee members were not aware of any outstanding Coaching matters. SK asked members to please remember thermalling etiquette – i.e. to join a thermal and to turn in it, in the same direction as those gliders already established within it. This is particularly important if both HGs and PGs are sharing a thermal, because of their different airspeeds.

Webmaster: TS reported that all was well, and was thanked for maintaining such an active site and of course, for his weather forecasts!

Social / Newsletter: The success – and immediacy – of our Members Forum had effectively replaced the need for a quarterly Newsletter, but JH aims to publish something for the website but mainly for viewing by non- / prospective members. Club Night attendances have fallen, but efforts to find speakers continue.

Treasurer's Report: ST presented a statement of accounts for 2012/13. These included the details of expenditure on both 2011 and 2012 site fees and reward costs for both our southerly and north-easterly sites within the financial year. As a result our Current + Savings + Paypal accounts, total balance over the year had decreased a little from £11784 to £11314 (at end of Feb 2013). There remains a liability for 4 years of Llantysilio fees which should total £840: the site agent is being pressed to submit overdue invoices.

In the year the Club gave a total of £250 to two charities: £200 to the Awyr Ambiwylans Cymru following a Club Night talk from their Operations Manager, and £50 towards a sponsored parachute jump for charity, made by the widow of our former member Neil Bates, who died of cancer last year.

In a normal full year our committed expenditure of £1250 would be covered by 90 member's subscriptions. Steve raised the possibility that, in the foreseeable future, subs might need to be increased from their very modest and longstanding rate of £15, if either the number of members decreased or our outgoings were to increase. Some discussion ensued on whether occasional-flying/distant members might be put off by an increase, and how our £15 compared to other clubs' subscriptions (middling).

Other Matters: There were no motions or matters raised by either the committee or by members, to be discussed at this AGM.

Election of Officers: As all officers / committee members were happy to continue in their roles (with the proviso re Jerry in his opening address!) and no other names were proposed, the existing committee was deemed to be re-elected.

Any other business: JH reminded us that 2013 was the 40th anniversary of the founding of the club, and asked if there were any suggestions as to how to celebrate the occasion. SK kindly offered his home as a barbecue venue for a fly-in, and Brian Dillon's pub-based end-of-year meal was another suggestion - a barrel of beer could be the club contribution to either venue (There is a new micro-brewery in Llangollen which would be very appropriate source!).

JH declared the meeting closed at 9.25pm

Summary of Accounts for the year

There follows a simple statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ending 28/02/13. A more detailed report may be requested from the Club Treasurer, Steve Taylor, at treasurer@nwhgpc.org.uk

Current Account:

Opening balance - £1,938.59.	Income - £1,688.00	Expenditure - £2,841.31	Closing Balance - £785.28
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Savings Account:

Opening balance - £9,711.97	Transfers and Interest - £304.89	Closing Balance - £10,016.86
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What's on?

Monthly Club Meetings assemble from 7.30 onwards at Broughton Wings Social Club at Airbus UK, Broughton, Chester CH4 0DR. Talks or whatever start at 8.15pm. Future meetings are scheduled for Monday 30th September, 28th October and 25th November, 27th Jan 2014, 24th Feb, etc., but as yet there are no firm plans for speakers or other entertainment – but we are working on it! Watch the Members Forum. If anyone can suggest subjects or speakers for our future meetings, let me know!

Club News and Information; contact details for all Club Officers, and a Membership application form, can be accessed on the Club Website at **<http://www.nwhgpc.org.uk>**.

All paid up members of the club who provided a valid e-mail address at renewal time should also have received an e-mail invite to join the "members only" area. If you have not received an invite and you feel you are eligible, please e-mail webmaster@nwhgpc.org.uk.

Contributions to this Newsletter are welcomed from any member. Ideally, please submit copy as a Text File or MS Word File on CD to Jerry Hazzard, Mill Cottage, Mill Road, Bronington, Whitchurch SY13 3HJ or by Email / Email attachment to jerry.hazzard@btinternet.com If you are unable to provide text in these formats, the editor is willing to type up your scripts from longhand! The editor reserves the right to correct grammar, syntax and spelling, and to trim articles to fit page layouts.

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