

North Wales Hang-Gliding & Paragliding Club

Newsletter – Summer 2014



Brian Dillon approaching 4000ft above Olu Deniz - April 2014

From the Chairman / Editor

As I compose this, wet and windy weather persists and keeps us grounded as May goes by (and encourages me to create one of our spasmodic Newsletters!). The first XCs have been flown and already, hours of airtime logged. We hope that a damp spring leads to a drier summer, with more opportunities for flying. But foremost, we also hope it will be **safe flying** – and that's down to you to make it so.

At the recent Club AGM, Steve Kynaston stood down as Club Sites Officer, having carried out the duty for some 25 years! Steve is the son of a farmer in the area, so grew up to know most of the farmers whose land we now use for our activity; local knowledge put to use to our advantage! A heartfelt 'thank you' to you, Steve, for all you have done to manage and preserve good relations with our site owners. Following its ratification at the AGM, the post of Sites Officer is now in the hands of Steve Taylor, who also remains Club Treasurer - for the time being.

I am now in my tenth year as Chairman and since I am in my late 70s, I don't think I shall ever overtake Steve's long service record! While I hope to be flying for a little longer, I think it is high time that someone else took on the Chairmanship – at the AGM next March perhaps. I also feel that it is time that some of our younger members joined the committee, to carry the Club forward for the next decade. We could do with someone taking over the job of Treasurer right away. None of the Committee are roles are very onerous and we get by with a couple of Committee Meetings each year. So, younger members, how about offering to help the club in the years to come? Talk to me!

News

Shut the gate!

In mid-April, a Llangollen bottom landing field gate was left open and some sheep got out, to the great annoyance of the farmer. The good news is that the matter was amicably resolved by prompt action by the (new) Sites Officer, but lessons should be learned:

- Above all, avoid landing in any field containing livestock, especially if you can safely reach one without. If you have no choice, land as far away from animals as you can, bunch up and get out!
- ALWAYS close the gate behind you when leaving the field where you land, whether an agreed bottom landing field or wherever your XC ends.
- Don't leave a gate open as a courtesy to another pilot who is (or might soon be) following you out. Sods law says the animals will beat him to it!
- Let's get into the habit of stressing these points when we give site briefings to visiting pilots.
- From my experience, sheep are pretty timid and move away from you; horses are easily spooked; cattle are curious and likely to approach for a closer look and can be potentially dangerous in a group.

I'm not sure of the best advice if a gate is tied open. This usually means the farmer is at work (you should have noticed this on your way down) and wants easy access for vehicles, in which case it is hard to believe there will be stock in that field. But if there were, I think I would shut the gate!

XC season started by K Colder - 11th April, Llangollen to Bridgenorth

Keith's flight report: "Arrived at Llangollen to find the biggest turn out of the year so far. Sky was good but with relatively low cloud base. Took off at 12 to check out the air with the intention of landing for lunch, but couldn't resist taking second thermal, over the back. Nearly had an early bath at Chirk (nothing new), but got a slow rough climb from the woodchip factory house thermal. Once over 2500ft, the climbs were nice. Expectation at that time was Oswestry, with hope/dream of Shrewsbury. Got to Oswestry and made base at 3800ft and aimed for cloud near Nescliffe - great and straight to base. Drift was SE so decided to head south to get under a nice street. Got there after low save and found climbs easy to find. A little rough low down, but fine above 2500ft. Glided to Shrewsbury and looked for landing field, but another damn thermal got in the way. Had a look at a nearby hill (north facing, possibly Lawley?) with lone paraglider waiting to take off (he didn't!). It was a long slow day and with no water container or food, I was starting to feel pretty b*****ed and at 60 km, decided to call it a day; could have made maybe another 10 or 20km with the sky still working, but was concerned over fatigue (wimp!) and landed next to the village of Astley Abbots, near Bridgenorth. A kind lady tending horse gave me a lift to the town and Simon was a hero in picking up my car and collecting me - we had a beer and meal in Bridgenorth - fine place!" Distance - 64km.

Airfield discipline

You may think that this is old news, but the subject is an 'evergreen' that never goes away and should be always in our minds. The views and recommendations of Carl Wallbank, currently one of Britain's leading Hang Glider pilots, as expressed in his feature in the Summer 2013 Newsletter (accessible from our website homepage) deserve every member's attention and observance. He presents a 'cast iron' case for better 'airfield discipline' that is impossible to challenge: had some of the points Carl makes been better applied at

the time, it is likely that one of our members would not have suffered such life-changing injuries at the Long Mynd last year.

We don't think of ourselves as using airfields but any place where any form of aircraft operates can be described as one, and appropriate safe operating procedures should be observed. And the busier that airfield, the more stringently they should be applied. A couple of PGs alone on a hill can agree to be much more relaxed about these procedures than say, Llangollen on a busy day when there may be 20 PGs and 10 HGs, at all different stages of flight from preparation, ready to launch, airborne and landing. Hopefully we all observe those elements of air law necessary to avoid risk of collision whilst in flight, but I know (because I may be as guilty as anyone!) that we could all do better as we make ready our wings; prepare to leave the ground; as we return to it and what we do with our wings while eating our sandwiches! And I have to admit that the hangies are better disciplined than us baggies!

The problems multiply as numbers of flyers increase, but make a quantum leap when you mix Paragliders (portable and quicker to prepare, minimal TO run, low landing speed, etc.) with Hang-Gliders (take longer to rig, heavier, faster flying and landing speed, etc.) – as we often do at Llangollen and a few other sites where both are operating.

Of course everything depends on how many are on site and what they are flying. Half a dozen PGs – no problem. 30 PGs – big problem! 30 PGs and 10 HGs – needs a full time marshal. And visitors who know nothing about our activities also need to be kept away from take-off and landing areas. I would like us all to willingly adopt a higher level of airfield zoning and discipline, and I propose – particularly with the Llangollen site in mind – the following points:

- **Preparation**

Hang Gliders should continue their good example of rigging / parking at the back of the field. Paragliders should unpack and prepare - and park between flights – well away from the actual take off edge, either towards the wire fence and gate to the east, or by the round pond to the west, leaving room for rigged HGs to approach take off.

- **Launch**

PGs should only approach the take-off edge with harness on, wing bunched up / all ready to lay out, build a wall and launch. HGs should only approach the take-off edge ready to clip in and launch. If conditions aren't to your liking for take-off, move back. *(Anyone has flown from the marshalled t/o site of Montmin above Lake Annecy, will know that this is how the marshal's control it. No-one is allowed to loiter on launch and a seriously failed take off is likely to put you at the back of the queue!).*

- **Landing**

Paragliders should land in the landing field and not in the take-off field, especially if it's a busy day. Try to land PGs in the NW sector of the field, leaving the central area of the field for the faster landing HGs. (OK, I accept that PGs may scratch in over the trees without enough height to reach the landing field, and drop into the take-off field instead: no great problem on a quiet day, but to be avoided on a busy one). Once safely down, bunch up the PG / carry the HG through to park in the take-off field if wishing to fly again, otherwise find a spot towards the quarry or stile to fold up your PG, or dismantle your HG.

The same ethos and practices can be applied at any flying site: clear zoning makes it safer for all.

Notes from an XC Workshop

The end of April Club Night was devoted to reviewing the essentials of planning and making XC flights and the following points may be helpful. Good luck!

Preparation

- Weather – watch trends - RASP probably the best info. Knowing wind direction, plan a route – use Google Earth to review terrain of likely route. Carry large scale map.
- Kit – Check it all (check list?) – fresh batteries – map – cash – ID / passport if abroad (*think big!*) – Gloves tied on to suit / harness.
- Drink & nourishment - be well nourished at start of day – avoid full /non-compressible full water bottles /camelbacks: an injury risk – sweets / energy bars; can be difficult to open while flying.
- Be on the hill and ready in good time.

Leaving the hill and en route

- Be decisive! Make it happen! Go with lift! In a thermal and climbing, go when it feels right!
- Centre on thermal core with every 360 – use instruments to assist you – ‘turn reversal’ works!
- Leave lift at cloudbase or airspace.
- Subsequent thermals – read ground and other trigger indicators - brown fields, birds, smells, smoke, other gliders - centre on ‘twitches’ and rough air – use clouds and cloud streets.
- *Above all, be patient - remember that zero on the vario is a climb, so work it!*
- Use radios to exchange news with other pilots flying the same route.
- ‘A big XC is lots of little ones joined together: extra distance is a bonus’.
- No GPS? Try to keep mental track of route and position – helps those who may retrieve you.

Landing and getting home

- Once committed to landing, determine wind direction – 360 to check drift.
- Give yourself height and room to land - clear of pylons, cables, trees, etc. - avoid fields with animals.
- Legs down in good time. If horizontal speed is high consider sliding in on seat. Remember to brake!
- Landing near a road avoids a long walk out. Try to identify where you are.
- Phone in for pre-arranged retrieve / to mates on hill willing to collect you – give location for rendezvous.
- Hitching home – seldom the problem you think it will be! People usually very helpful.
- Wear flying suit, carry helmet. Stand where driver has time to see you / stop safely. ‘Glider Pilot’ notice works!

- Bus Pass – phone apps with bus / train times - taxi operators.

AGM Report and Accounts

The NWHGPC Annual General Meeting took place at the Airbus Social Club, Broughton, on Monday 31st March 2014. Members present - Officers: Chairman Jerry Hazzard (JH), Sites (retiring) Steve Kynaston (SK), Webmaster Tim Salter (TS), Membership/Secretary Ian Home (IH), Social/Newsletter Jerry Hazzard, Treasurer & (incoming) Sites officer Steve Taylor (ST), HG Coach Steve Hogan (SH), Powered HG rep Bill Seward (BS). 11 other members were present.

Apologies: Simon Wilson (member of committee without portfolio), Brian Dillon (PG Chief Coach/Safety), Neil Turner.

Chairman's opening address

Jerry summarised the past years flying and club activity: "2013 will be remembered as the year in which two members – Stu Lloyd and Lea Kerr - suffered life changing accidents within a few weeks of each other early in the season. I am sure that I was not alone in pausing to take a long hard look at my commitment to participation in the sport, but the sheer pleasure of free flight won through – but I hope that it is tinged with a tad more caution. Perhaps this pause for thought is why the year did not see so much activity as usual – but the wet and windy weather didn't help. XC flight numbers and distances recorded in the Club League last year were not even half of those achieved in 2012. Meanwhile and on other hillsides, Graham Cumming came out as the winner of the British Paragliding Cup – well done, Graham!

I am pleased to report that all is well with our flying sites and relationships with our site owners. 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. I understand that, with one exception, they are all willing to remain in office again for at least another year. You will learn, as this meeting progresses, that there is to be a significant change within the committee, and this leaves a potential vacancy for a new committee member to take up.

It is increasingly desirable that some of our younger members should put themselves forward to serve on the Committee so that there is continuity for the future. It is not an onerous task: we manage with a couple of meetings each year. Why not put something back into the Club for the support it has given to you to enjoy the delights of free flight? While on the subject, I am now entering the tenth year of my Chairmanship – and I wouldn't mind if that was the last. I am happy to do it, but change is a catalyst - and you can have too much of a good thing!

I hope that 2014 will be better flying year for us all. Personally, I shall fly within my comfort zone and with luck and a fair wind, make more XC flights myself. Fly often - and safely - in 2014".

The 2013 AGM minutes were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting.

Club Officers reports:

Membership/Secretary IH reported that our current paid-up membership is 121 of 125 at the last AGM. The reduction resulting from lapsed memberships as well as 5 members leaving the sport. In addition, as mentioned in Jerry's report, unfortunately 2 members were seriously injured during the early part of the 2013 season and are no longer able to fly.

At the moment emails have gone to 29 lapsed members asking them to renew or confirm their departure from the sport - most have yet to reply. There were an exceptional 15 new members over the past 12 months largely coming from Mark Dann's school and Airways.

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 March and resulted in 10 club members requiring reminders to renew their BHPA memberships. One member subsequently emailed that he had left the sport, and the remaining 9 need to clarify their positions.

And just a reminder that when you go out flying on our sites or at another clubs' sites: you should always carry your BHPA card to prove you are paid-up.

A recent email request from the Pennine Soaring Club, following a fatality of a pilot during the winter, asked clubs how they dealt with "rogue" pilots on their sites. Our safety officer Brian answered at the time that this particular pilot had appeared at Thurstaston but had agreed not to fly when asked to show proof of BHPA membership or any other insurance. "I subsequently found that Rob was untrained, unqualified and uninsured. It is a great shame that a flyer should pay the ultimate price for not being properly trained and my sympathy goes to his family who are left behind".

Sites Officer: In his final report, Steve Kynaston said that all is well with our site landowners at Accre, y Gyrn Moelfre, and Llangollen. He had now served on the NWHGPC committee for 30 years first as secretary and for the last 25 years as Sites officer and was handing over responsibility to Steve Taylor. They had been on the Christmas rewards round together so that ST could be introduced to the landowners. Doug Jones, although no longer a member, had been happy to continue with the 'whiskey run' in the Penycloddiau area (and had submitted a detailed report of current landowners/farmers to the committee).

Bill Seward asked if it was permissible to drive off the public road halfway towards take-off at Penmaenbach to reduce the carrying distance for HGs. SH and Steve Armstrong answered that the farmer, whose track would be used, was happy with this provided that the track was not obstructed. There was some further discussion of the hazards associated with that track.

JH expressed sincere thanks to SK for his long service to the club as he left the Sites Officer role, and hoped that he could continue to act as accounts auditor.

Safety/PG Coaching *JH read Brian Dillon's report in his absence; he was currently on a BHPA Senior Coach/Trainee Instructor course, for which the club was paying the course fees.*

"During the period March 13 to March 14 no accidents or incidents were reported to me regarding any of our members or sites during this period (with the exception of Lea and Stuart referred to below). One member voiced his concern about another member's airmanship while flying Llangollen late 2013 and I have discussed the matter with both pilots since then, and am spending time with one of the two, with ongoing coaching.

One other incident springs to mind while flying in Turkey last year. I was called by radio from a club member saying he was having difficulty getting down. When asked his position, he said he was about five miles out to sea! Luckily I managed to talk him back to a safe landing on the beach, but had the wind changed it could have been very different.

I do feel that in the odd case pilots are released from school a little too early and left to fend for them. While nobody expects newly qualified pilots to be ace, I would have thought that basic decision making and a few rapid decent techniques would be gone through before they leave the school and only then brought on by the club coaches.

All the club coaches continue to help members and I thank them for their valuable assistance as I'm sure all members do. Finally, I am pleased to see Lea Kerr (HG) and Stuart Lloyd (PG) improve after a very difficult period for them both and wish them the very best for the future".

HG Coaching SH reported there had been no new HG pilots and therefore no requirement for HG coaching.

Webmaster TS reminded members that he had made it possible to 'tweet' from the hill with tag #NWHGPC directly to the club forum. JH pointed out also how invaluable Tim's weather forecasts/predictions were on the forum and thanked him for all his good work for the club.

Social/Newsletter JH asked for ideas for club night speakers as he thought that we had exhausted all those obvious ones within range. **Action: Everyone!**

Since the club forum was so widely used now the newsletter was no longer required at a frequency of 4 per year, but being available on the club website once or twice a year it still provided a 'shop window' to potential members. The AGM minutes would be included in the next newsletter. Clive suggested that extracts from the forum might be a useful source for the newsletter.

Treasurer ST presented a statement of accounts for 2013/14, and explained the source of all the entries. These included the details of our income from membership, Llangollen site revenue from visiting pilots, and Repack event income. On the expenditure side we were finally up-to-date with our Llantysilio fees after several years of our asking for annual invoices to be submitted. In the future this annual payment would initially be £200 (had been £210). Our payments for site fees and annual rewards to landowners were detailed, and the senior coach course fee and PayPal collection fees were included.

As a result our Current + Savings + PayPal accounts, total balance over the year had risen a little from £11314 to £11580 (end Feb 2014). In a normal full year our committed expenditure of £1340 would be covered by 100 members' subs. In the year, the club gave a donation of £40 to the Awyr Ambiwylans Cymru (Wales Air Ambulance) in lieu of a speaker's expenses.

A summary of the Club's Accounts for the year ending March 2014 now follows. A more detailed report may be requested from the Club Treasurer, Steve Taylor, at treasurer@nwhgpc.org.uk

Current Account:

Opening balance - £785.28.	Income - £1,470.00	Expenditure - £2,038.82	Closing Balance - £216.46
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PayPal Account:

Opening balance - £512.21	Income - £1,866.00	Outgoings - £1,247.10	Closing Balance - £1,041.30
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Savings Account:

Opening balance - £10,016.86	Transfers and Interest - £305.03	Closing Balance - £10,321.89
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There was a short discussion on the appallingly-low interest rate on our (business) savings account with Barclays – currently £5 annual interest on approximately £10,000 – equivalent to 0.05%. JH said that he would enquire into an alternative bank account, but was not optimistic. **Action JH**

There was a lively discussion initiated by Clive on the likelihood of the club purchasing Llangollen take-off. Paul J answered that clubs who owned their own land would be watching closely the legal outcome of an as-yet-unstarted case involving a seriously-injured NWHGPC pilot and what could be argued as a lack of care of that club where the accident occurred.

Election of Officers With the exception of the change of Sites officer from SK to ST where we would continue to benefit from having a Welsh speaker as contact with the farming/landowning community, all other officers were happy to continue in their roles. Therefore without any nominations no election was required.

JH asked if anyone would consider themselves as Treasurer, so relieving ST of his dual and somewhat-conflicting role (Treasurer and 'whiskey run' Sites Officer), and if there couldn't be someone brave enough to relieve him from his 10+ year Chairmanship; and finally if a volunteer from the HG side would come forward as a general member on the committee. Bill Seward asked if members were happy for him to continue as Powered HG rep on the committee. No objections were forthcoming.

Any other business.

Dr Bill also asked if some simple securing arrangement could be made for the string used to tie the double entry gates to the landing/parking field at Llangollen, e.g. bungee cord. **Action Steve Armstrong.**

Paul J raised the possibility of arranging a fly/camping weekend in the area below Llangollen take-off. SK mentioned the farmer Martin Sands right below the forest as a possible site. Some discussion ranged over the size and type of roast meat (chicken to hog) that might be required for the numbers expected! (Sec: There is a new micro-brewery in Llangollen which might be very appropriate as a source for beer!).

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm

What's on?

Monthly Club Meetings assemble from 7.30 onwards on the last Monday evening of each month, except if a Bank Holiday, at Broughton Wings Social Club at Airbus UK, Broughton, Chester CH4 0DR. Talks or whatever start at 8.15pm. At the time of compiling this Newsletter in May 2014, there are no firm plans for speakers or other entertainment in the autumn and winter S– 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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