

NORTH WALES HANG-GLIDING & PARAGLIDING CLUB

Newsletter – Summer 2015



From the Chairman

As the phot above illustrates, we welcomed Marc Asquith, BHPA Chairman, to the Club AGM at the end of March, where he presented a well-deserved BHPA Award of Merit to Steve Kynaston, in recognition of Steve's 30 years' service on the NWHGPC Committee. Marc also held a brief question and answer session; this, and the business of the AGM, is reported later in this Newsletter. It transpired that Steve and Marc had met before while both were learning to fly hang-gliders in South Wales, where they attended different universities!

I sense that the season got off to a slow start with less winter flying, but things are now looking up quite well – especially our Hang- Glider members. On April 26th, a day too windy for PGs, a group of our Hangies took advantage of PG absence and clocked up some enviable XCs from Llangollen, ranging from 50 to 190km! Then, in late June, Carl Wallbank set a new UK personal distance record with 338km from Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, to the Norfolk coast near Saxenthorpe!

Elsewhere, the season has seen good paragliding at Moel Famau, and in the north easterly winds which have prevailed at Penmaen Bach and Peny East (and, so it seems, almost every day at Thurstaston!) but very little in the way of XC flights. Then, a few days ago, Matt Cook flew 120 km from Llangollen to Market Bosworth in Leicester*. And currently, Steve Nash is taking part in the Red Bull X-Alps competition again this year! Congratulations to all: pick the right day and it can all happen!

(One cannot fail to add that Helen Gant of Derbyshire SC, shared the initial eastbound flight with Matt, only to leave him behind as she flew 175km, to Corby in Northants.. Brilliant!)*

News

Parking at Llangollen: While roadside parking is still OK, we are under increasing criticism from local farmers to park with wheels well clear of the road surface: indeed, they say "You've got the field to park in, so why park on the roadside?" Tractors and trucks get bigger and if there are a string of cars on the roadside, it is an increasing problem for them to pass safely. So, dear members and visitors, in future please park within the field as a matter of preference. The Site Guide advice has been updated and new notices have been affixed to the stile and double gate into the field. The best spot to park is close to the gate – so long as you leave tractor access to the field. Although it is a bit further to walk, it is the highest and driest spot. You can drive towards the stile/quarry and park there if you wish, but beware if the ground is wet. Finally, please don't let stock in the field escape: CLOSE THE GATE behind you as you enter and as you leave – even before you park tidily.

Airbus factory visit: I have arranged an Airbus Factory visit for a maximum of 20, for the morning of Thursday 1st October. We cannot see it all: we are down for a visit to the A320 wing production facility – metal bashing rather than composites. I have a dozen or so names already – if you would like to join us, let me know soon. Two weeks before the visit, I have to submit full names, date of birth, place of birth and nationality for each participant, so include those details with your request for a place, please.

Club AGM Report

Present at Meeting: Officers: Chairman & Social/Newsletter: Jerry Hazzard (JH), Sites and retiring treasurer: Steve Taylor (ST), Webmaster: Tim Salter (TS), Membership/Secretary: Ian Home (IH), Treasurer (incoming): Fin O'Leary (FL), Senior PG Coach & Safety: Brian Dillon (BD), HG Coach: Steve Hogan (SH), Powered HG rep Dr Bill Seward (BS). Plus nine other members were present. No apologies for absence were received.

Chairman's opening address: Jerry welcomed all present. Including BHPA Chairman, Marc Asquith, who had come to present a BHPA Award of Merit certificate to Steve Kynaston, to recognize his 30 years or so of service to the Club. Steve spent about five years as Secretary and then 25 years as Sites Officer, a post he relinquished at the AGM last year.

JH then remarked that his 2014 address could equally be applied to this year's flying and club position. "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, and with one exception, are all willing to remain in office for at least another year.

My recollections of last year's flying were that it was not that brilliant. My hours and flights were down a bit and fewer XC flights were made compared with other years, with only five members making them, with Keith Colder and Dave Edwards setting enviable examples. I didn't see very much HG but maybe they flew when it was too windy for me! There has already been some good flying days this year: let's hope for many more".

BHPA Award of Merit Certificate presentation to Steve Kynaston: This Certificate was presented by BHPA Chairman, Marc Asquith, in recognition of Steve's 30 years' service on the Club Committee, Steve's award was backed up with a bottle of Welsh whiskey from the club. Marc commented that he had met Steve before - on his 1977 introduction to hang-gliding while at Swansea University, which paralleled Steve starting his hang-gliding career in the same year, while at Cardiff University.

Questions to Marc Asquith: Marc then invited questions from members before the AGM proper began. Steve Armstrong asked where hang-gliding's future lay. MA replied that BHPA stats showed that HG members had levelled off at around 1100 active members as increasingly less-active members had by now left the association. In addition in support of allowing the sole UK hang-glider manufacturer to certify future models, and to act as a back-up, the BHPA had been persuaded by the only other European HG tester to continue to maintain a vehicle-based testing rig. This demonstrates BHPA's backing of HG.

Clive Mills asked about the high cost of insuring himself through the BHPA as a tandem PG pilot, which at around £1000 per year for a reasonable level of cover had caused him to stop flying tandem. MA gave a comprehensive answer – based on the history of one tandem PG claim against a BHPA pilot-in-charge which was settled at £2.4 million, a cap on the level of cover had been agreed with our insurers at just £25,000, subsequently raised to £50,000. With increasing interest from the microlight (SSDR and 2 seaters) community to be insured through BHPA at a similar cap on cover of £50,000, MA felt that for the time being a compromise on cover for different parts of the sport had been achieved although he believed that with an improved accident rate non-BHPA scheme is charging £275 for third-party liability cover for paramotor pilots.

BS asked about the wisdom of retaining club funds for flying site purchase. MA replied that the sites purchase fund building from members' voluntary contributions now stood at about £13,000 and was increasing more rapidly recently at about £6,000 a year. It would be available as a quickly-available short-term loan to clubs to back up their own funds for existing flying sites purchase.

A short discussion followed on members' ability to prevent non-BHPA pilots from flying our negotiated flying sites. MA recognised the problem and pointed out that while members were using those sites with the landowners' agreement, non-BHPA pilots were outside of the negotiating club's agreement and were therefore trespassing. Club members have the right to police their agreed sites using verbal persuasion as a tool. MA encouraged club members to ask visitors to prove their BHPA membership by card if not by helmet sticker.

At this point Marc Asquith wished the Club well and left the meeting.

The 2014 AGM minutes were accepted as an accurate record of that meeting; proposed by Steve Kynaston and seconded by Clive Mills.

Club Officers reports:

Secretary & Membership: IH reported that our current paid-up membership is 126, up from 121 at the last AGM. "In February I sent emails to 43 lapsed members asking them to renew or confirm their departure from the sport. Six members subsequently renewed. There are still about 21 lapsed members who I believe still fly regularly. Just as in the previous 12 months, there were 15 new members joining the club largely coming from Mark Dann's school and Airways. Two of the new members were father and son hang-glider pilots, Derek and Ned. Three members left the sport, and around 7 have not renewed. These 7 are probably members of other clubs who've chosen not to renew with us.

Our annual members' check with the BHPA, which is required as part of re-registering the club (confirming club officials, club description), was carried out in February, and is designed to protect club members collectively from being liable for un-insured pilots injuring or causing damage to third-parties whilst flying our sites. This check resulted in 13 club members requiring reminders to renew their BHPA memberships. Of these 13, four members subsequently emailed that they had left the sport, one renewed his BHPA membership, one is awaiting renewal and the remaining 7 need to clarify their positions".

Sites Officer: Steve Taylor reported that it had been an eventful year with certain of our sites. When a field gate at Llangollen bottom landing was left open by a club member, a flock had made a break for freedom and subsequently recovered by the farmer's father. ST had had to assure the farmer that the matter of always closing gates had been dealt within the club. Off the top road at Llangollen the farmer at Pant Dafydd Goch had had his access road through the conifers blocked, possibly by the cars of visitors, and had also had problems with the sheer number of incorrectly parked cars on the grass verge making it very difficult for two vehicles to pass each other. Some discussion followed about the best place to park within the field to avoid either causing wear of the pasture or becoming stranded on soft ground (best parking is nearest the entry gate).

At Thurstaston ST had received a request from the Park rangers for a formal agreement for us to use the site. The park rep. agreed that our site guide could form the basis of an agreement and he would draw up a document, which is still awaited.

In November 2014 we had a talk and discussion at club night with the manager of air traffic control at Hawarden (Broughton) about how a proposed Radio Mandatory Zone (RMZ) might affect our flying both on the Clwydians and going XC from there, mainly from Moels Accre and Famau. Following those discussions the western boundary of the RMZ was moved eastwards of the Clwydians, and reduced in size. ST had provided data from our club league on the number of XC's since 2010 which would have entered this proposed RMZ, totalled at 33. In a further meeting with ST and JH in March 2015 the ATC Manager had proposed that a text alert to a single Hawarden number from a pilot hoping to enter the RMZ and sent before his take-off would enable ATC to warn air traffic of our likely presence.

In Jan 2015 we were made aware of the scale of the downhill biking and paramotoring 'Parafest' due to be held during 12- 14th June next. An email discussion had occurred between ST and the festival organiser about the festival's effect on our own flying over that weekend. While not directly

affecting the top fields at Llangollen, ST had contacted our landowner/farmers to make them aware of the festival and that the club was not involved with its organisation. Nevertheless the landowner had asked for proof of our (BHPA) insurance and ST had provided this.

ST commented about the increased use of Trefor Rocks/ Panorama as a flying site by club members and whether we need a site guide yet. JH felt that we need to fly there in a greater variety of conditions as most flights had been extended top-to-bottoms with the occasional mini-XC.

JH asked for other members' thoughts on the fact that Doug Jones, although no longer a member, continued to represent the club on the 'whiskey run' to four farms in the Penycloddiau area. No adverse comments were given. ST pointed out that the price paid for both whiskey and chocolates could be reduced whilst still maintaining their quality.

Safety/PG Coaching: BD gave his thanks to club coaches and members who'd helped newcomers with site briefings etc, and reported that there had only been two minor incidents during the year and none resulting in injury fortunately.

HG Coaching: SH reported that he had not had contact with the new HG's Derek and Ned Knowles so hadn't been required to provide any HG coaching. SH felt his improving mobility would allow him to provide coaching when needed.

Webmaster: TS commented that the club forum and website continued to be well-used and invaluable to members. IH raised the recent barring from the club forum of lapsed members on his request to encourage members to maintain their membership or at least reply to emails.

Social & Newsletter: JH reported that we had had some excellent speakers during the year. The newsletter has been reduced to once a year and a large part of that was the previous AGM minutes. It was now available via the club homepage rather than as a posted hard copy.

Powered flying: BS briefly stated that the only powered-HG pilot Phil Edgar was away ocean sailing so his duties were shrinking.

Treasurer: Outgoing Treasurer ST presented a statement of accounts for 2014/15 and explained the sources of all the entries. Our payments for site fees and annual rewards to landowners were detailed. As a result our Current + Savings + PayPal accounts total balance over the year had risen a little from £11580 to £11961 over the year. IH added the comment that without the effects of the Repack or Llangollen visitors fees our annual outgoings of £1373 would be covered by 96 members paying a net £14.29 each through PayPal.

FL, as incoming treasurer, warned that, as we now had some income from non-members, namely Llangollen visitor fees and Repack fees, we could become liable for paying Corporation Tax if our profit exceeded £100 a year. He suggested that he contact HMRC to point out that we trade below that profit level and have done in the past and should therefore be exempt from tax. FL had enquired about the club acquiring a debit card to act as guarantor to our PayPal account in place of JH's personal card.

Copies of the Accounts for the year ending 30 March 2015 can be obtained from the Treasurer.

Election of Officers: Fin O'Leary was voted in formally as Treasurer by a show of hands, proposed by Clive Mills and seconded by Steve K. With no other changes there was no election required. With Simon Wilson's retirement from the committee as general member, JH asked for volunteers particularly from the younger end of the club and from the HG side. He re-iterated that he still wished for someone brave enough to relieve him from his 10++ year Chairmanship.

Any other Business: ST mentioned the new pair of signs to be fixed to the Llangollen take-off field gate, one in Welsh and one in English, outlining how the field was to be used to avoid hazards for landing PG or HGs. ST offered them for examination.

JH declared the meeting closed at 9.50pm

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 28th July, 28th September, 26th October and 30th November, but as yet there are no plans for speakers or other entertainment: watch the Members Forum. If anyone can suggest subjects or speakers for any of our future meetings, let me know!

Jerry Hazzard
Chairman & Editor

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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