



# Nova

The Magazine of the Avon Hang  
Gliding and Paragliding Club

November 2010

**Cover Photo:** A pilot heads out over the vast open plains of South Africa. Rear cover – flying at the Cape. Rob Kingston

## Editor's Bit



Welcome to the latest edition of Nova.

The theme for this issue is 'Safety' and in this issue the Chief Hang gliding Coach Chris Jones presents his take on staying safe.

Many people will have had a day or two flying this year where they felt uncomfortable either because it was too busy or people were flying unpredictably or aggressively. People's perceptions of who was in the right do vary so take the opportunity to talk through any 'incident' calmly and openly with the person involved face-face as soon as you land – don't leave it to posting on forums after the event. I have to put my hand up as someone who has both talked to others and been talked to in equal measure this year, and it has given me the opportunity to reflect, learn and hopefully improve my flying. One thing, however, that should never happen is where a person chooses to fly and does not know the basic rules of the air! In the club we have not one but two safety officers; Richard Hellen and Tony Moore, who you can speak to about any incidents or to seek their advice.

Also in this edition Simon Chippendale talks about his own personal experiences of attending a paragliding SIV course and what it meant for him. 'Simulation d'Incident en Vol' (SIV) is a course conducted over water that allows you to understand your wing in a systematic way, simulate what can go wrong, and what to do about it when it does happen. I'm of the opinion that if something does go wrong in the air, and it will, that you should have a plan up your sleeve of how to recover the situation, and if not then to know where your reserve handle is, how to pull and deploy it, and just as importantly to know that it is packed correctly and connected to your harness. So when did you last re-pack your reserve and have it checked? During the year Richard Hellen organised a very successful reserve repack session and he has plans for another over the winter.

I also talk about a flying trip to the big skies of South Africa. Also in this issue we have a new occasional series 'InSite' which looks at flying sites not in our immediate area, but also not that far away either.

I hope you enjoy the magazine.

Safe flying.

**Rob Kingston**

## Chairman's Chunter – November 2010



Rob has put together a really interesting magazine this issue, with an emphasis on a topic that should be close to all our hearts - safety. Personally, I've had a really safe year, but that was for all the wrong reasons - I've hardly flown at all. But I hope that those of you who have managed to fly have also managed to stay safe. Of course, we've all heard about the few incidents where people have hurt themselves, but we don't often hear about the near misses (except when Richard Hellen prompts us to bare all at club meetings). But that makes me wonder, how do we know when we've had a near miss?

If something happens and you think "blimey, that was close", then it's pretty obvious. But it's possible that you may be having near misses more often than you think. Do you ever feel that you're working hard to keep track of where everyone is around you? Do you ever fly along a ridge hoping that the pilot heading towards you is not going to box you in between the ridge and another pilot, and knowing that you have just a few seconds to make a decision about which way to turn? Do you ever fly a beat and end up extending it further than you want to because other pilots prevent you from turning? All those things have happened to me on crowded ridges.

Those circumstances feel dangerous to me, and the reason is that I am not fully in control of the situation. It would only take one or two unexpected actions by another pilot, and the situation could turn nasty. Now, if there's one thing that makes flying safer, it's being in control! So if flying begins to feel like that, I simply land. The logic goes like this: if I land, I can fly again another time; if I stay in the air, it might be the last time I fly.

That's why I think that Chris Jones' article on crowded flying is well worth reading. Flying is supposed to be fun, so if the situation worries you, then don't do it. Make your own decision about what feels safe - don't be influenced by all those other people who look so comfortable in the air (half of them are probably having a bad time, but it may not look that way to you). And if you're not worried by those situations, please don't hog the air - there are people like me on the ground who would like to have a go please. Chris' article is quite strongly worded, but I think he has hit the right tone. As he says crowded flying is "group madness, group stupidity, and individual selfishness". Please think about what he has said, and act on it. What could be better than safe, enjoyable flying?

And now for something completely different... The AGM in October was very well attended (no doubt due to the attractiveness of Nev Almond, who gave a fascinating talk on XC flying). We elected the 2011 committee, which includes two new faces, Mel Rawlings and Ian Anslow - welcome to them both! My thanks go to this year's committee members, many of whom were re-elected for 2011. They have all put in a great deal of work this year. And special thanks go to Ali Lees and Martin Nichols, who did not stand for re-election. Ali has done a stalwart job of organising our social scene for the last three years, and her work has really contributed to the strength of the club. Martin has been our PG Chief Coach for the last two years, and has made a real difference to the coaching scene. Thanks also to Andre Odinius who stood down from his Membership Secretary role during the year because of work commitments.

Talking of the committee, this year is my fourth year as chairman, and I have decided not to stand for election again next year. I enjoy doing it, but I think that it will be time for a change next year. I still have a couple of things I would like to do this year, but after that I think someone new would bring new ideas to keep the club lively and moving forward.

One last thing – get your tickets for the Christmas party before they sell out! See the advert in this issue for details. It promises to be a good one. See you there, and don't forget to take your photos for the photo competition!

**Richard Danbury**

## Club News



The Avon HGPG Club AGM took place in October, and was well attended.

The formal matters were soon over and business moved on to a most inter talk by Neville Almond on all aspects of cross-country flying, and passing on his tips gathered from over three decades of flying.

- It was approved that there would be a new post (as yet unfilled) of Club Secretary. The role of Treasurer and Membership Secretary are to be combined.
- Three committee members stood down during 2010. Andre Odinius as membership secretary (whose post was taken on by Graham Richards whilst still continuing as Treasurer), Ali Lees as Social Secretary and Martin Nichols as Chief Paragliding Coach. The club would like to thank them all for their efforts.
- We welcome two new members to the 2010/11 Committee; Ian Anslow who takes over as Social Secretary and Mel Rawlings as Chief Coach Paragliding.

The full list of the 2010/11 Committee is given below. All contact details are on the website.

## The 2010/11 Committee

Role	Who
Chairman	Richard Danbury
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	Graham Richards
Secretary	
Social Secretary	<b>Ian Anslow</b>
Sites (Overall)	Nick Somerville
Sites (North)	Wayne Buckland
PG Safety	Richard Hellen
PG Competitions	Ken Wilkinson
PG Low Airtime	Iain Mackenzie
HG Safety	Tony Moore
HG Competitions	Neil Atkinson
HG Low Airtime	John Cheale
Nova Editor	Rob Kingston
Webmaster	Rich Harding
Librarian	Ben Friedland
Chief Coach HG	Chris Jones
Chief Coach PG	<b>Mel Rawlings</b>

2010 proved to be yet another interesting year for the club. Even though numbers were down the club remains on a solid financial footing and with many active members.

- I think it is important to acknowledge the hard work of the club Chairman Richard Danbury and to Graham Richards the Treasurer/Membership Secretary for all their efforts during the year.
- The club finally concluded its agreement with the National Trust to fly Spencer's Bowl and Morgan's Ridge at Mere. Already some excellent flights have been made both sides. A big thank you should go to both Nick Somerville and Richard Danbury for their extended efforts to clinch this. Note that there are specific requirements and times for flying these sites and the club website should be consulted. Wayne Buckland is the northern sites officer and the fact that no major access issues have surfaced suggests that a lot of hard work is being put in on your behalf!
- Martin Nichols and Chris Jones have had a full year in their Chief Coach roles and much has been achieved. Due to work commitments Martin is handing on his role to Mel Rawlings. If you want to take your Pilot or Advanced Pilot exam then this is the time of year to do it. Also we have a large number of club coaches who will be only too pleased to help less experienced people out.

- In PG competitions the club reached the final of the British Club Challenge (BCC), but unfortunately at the only day of competition held at Corndon Hill (Long Mynd Club) they weren't able to complete a valid task. Despite that the beer and hog roast were consumed. A big thank you to Ken Wilkinson for arranging things throughout the year. Remember if you want to get involved in comps then have a chat with Ken, and for the Low Airtime pilots (LAT's) then your contact is Ian Mackenzie.
- In HG comps Neil Atkinson has been very active, but also newer members have had some considerable success. John Cheale continues to encourage and to promote hang gliding amongst the newer members and arranges many foreign trips.
- You will notice some changes to the website - which had to be delayed for a few months (!) Thanks to Rich Harding.
- Ben Friedland runs the library and several new books and DVDs were acquired during 2010. If you have any specific requests for potential new purchases then Ben is your man.
- On the social scene Ali Lees arranged possibly the most high profile series of events of any club in the UK. Ali's parting shot was another very enjoyable and successful Mere Bash held in September (more of that later). Ian Ansow has now taken over and I think he is quickly realising just how big Ali's boots were. A full programme of events is planned for 2011.



The AVON Hangliding and Paragliding Club  
invites You to celebrate  
Christmas at the




# GRAIN BARGE

(map on pg2)

**11<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm**

## Buffet Menu

Homemade bread

Chicken & wild mushroom terrine

Apricot, honey & brandy glazed ham

Gravadlax with citrus mayo

Smoked Haddock Fish Cakes

Marinated Olives & Feta

Houmous & Homemade Crusty Bread

Crispy polenta with peperonata

Mixed leaf salad with shavings of winter root vegetables

Raspberry & almond tart with a warm, spiced, dark chocolate sauce

**£20 per head**

Payments to be made by direct bank transfer before 11 November 2010  
to: AVON HANG GLIDING sort code: 40-09-19 bank a/c: 71362372  
Please put a reference of: "Your Surname xmas"

**Remember to bring Your Photo's along for the Best Photo of the year competition. There will be the annual prize giving (for XC league, best flights etc)**

**Please bring Your MP3's & IPODS along so we can all dance**







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# mid-winter UPLIFT

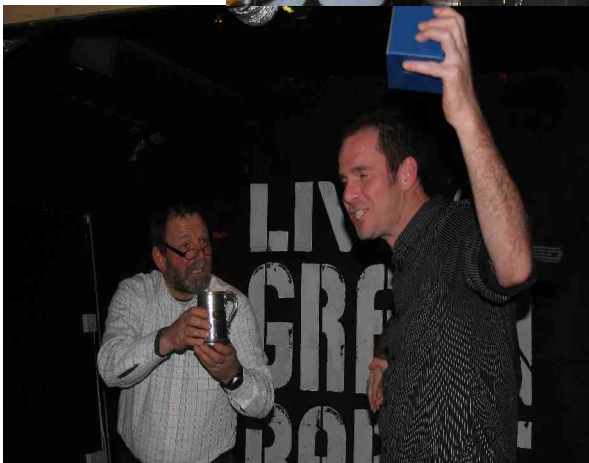
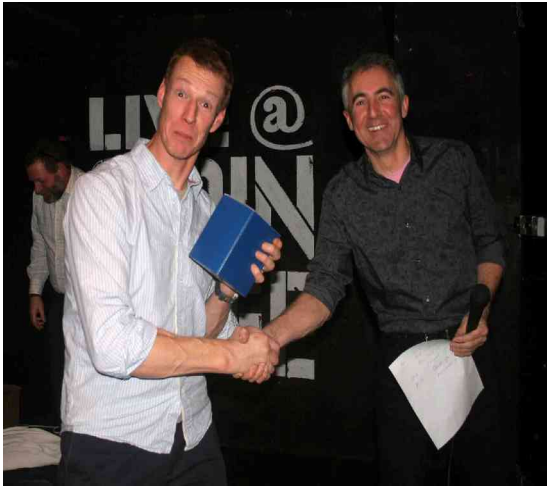
## Celebrating paragliding through films & lectures

Speakers Toby Colombe flying big distances in mountains  
Steve Nash in Mongolia  
Recent films inc. Jocky Sanderson's  
Security in flight 2  
Talk by Air Ambulance, Photo comp, (Parachute repack £20)  
10.30-9.30pm tickets £10 adv. or £12.50 door

**December 4th Shrewsbury Gateway Centre**  
In aid of Midland Air Ambulance  
[www.longmynd.org/about/social\\_uplift](http://www.longmynd.org/about/social_uplift)

# 2010 What a year that was!

Thanks to Ali Lees



*2009 Annual Dinner awards*





*Tim Pentreath (and other club members) talked about competition flying*



*Richards x 3 where to fly*





*Greg Hammerton talking about flying in South Africa*



*Marin Cray who talked about Parahawking*

## **WHITE HORSE MARQUEES** (Sponsors of the Mere Bash)

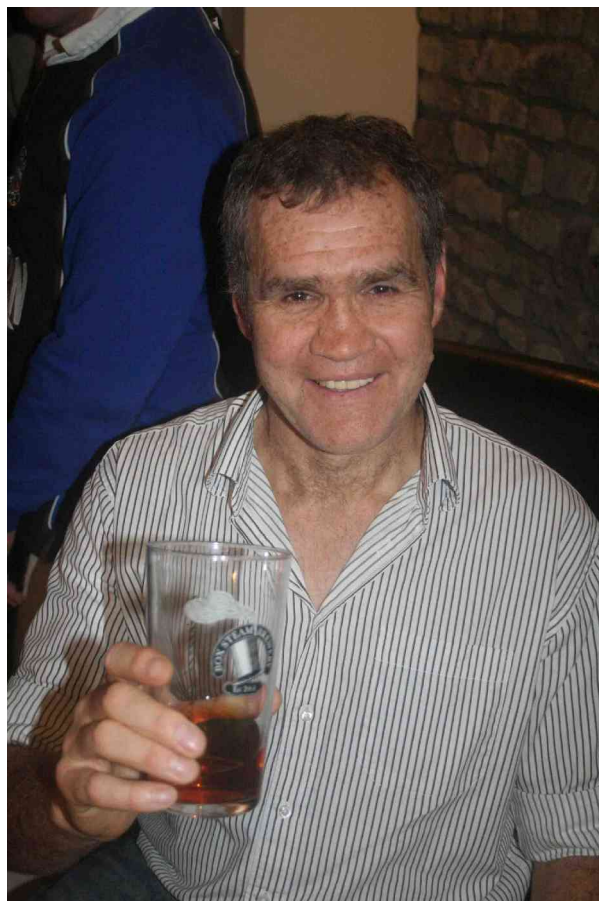
Why not try flying something different in 2010 like Bertie's new open-cockpit microlight (below left)?

Full training up to NPPL given in this fantastic fun flying machine!  
 Or how about flying on water with a Sky Ski Hydrofoil (below right)?  
 Trial flights by appointment.



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*Nev Almond who talked about XC flying*

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*The legendary John Silvester who talked about his early climbing career, how he took up flying and about his adventures in The Himalayas.*



*Three of the most experienced Himalayan pilots together at an Avon Club night!*

*Jim Mallinson, Eddie Colfox and John Silvester*



And then there was the Mere Bash in September...



*The band Dark Horse*



*Dark Horse featured a guest guitarist who was indeed a dark horse and whose identity was well concealed. He (or she) was the only one in the band who didn't need a square meal (or two).*

The raffle had a few surprises...







# Are we having fun yet?

Chris Jones

Having spent six long weeks in Mumbai India so far there is one thing that I can say for sure, "no way are you getting me driving anything on these roads".



It is hard to describe how utterly mad the traffic is in the suburbs of Mumbai. Six lanes lined up at the lights, at least three of those lanes using space on the opposite side of the road. I suppose I should be thankful when they even stop at the lights, often they don't bother.

A local blogger vents his feelings about being stuck in Mumbai madness and says "When I am stuck in this situation, what do I do? I curse the traffic, curse the government for not taking adequate measures to curb traffic, curse the traffic cop for not being able to regulate traffic properly. But never ever for once think that it can be a problem with the people and not with the government."

So what's this got to do with flying? OK, here comes the punch line to this parable: Mumbai traffic is a lot like what I often see on sites like Mere and Westbury. Pilots cramming themselves into the air, beyond sensible, all desperate to grab their 10 minutes of crisis ridden airtime. Why do we do this?

We do this because we think we have to. We don't want to miss out on that thermal or the latest bit of ridge lift, just in case that is all there is for the day. It all sounds reasonable until you see the big picture and realise just how ridiculously dangerous the situations are that we are creating. It's group madness, group stupidity and individual selfishness.

Collisions, though still rare, are becoming a regular occurrence and with them come injury and death. But more than that, the conditions that lead to them are not any fun to be flying in. We all know what I am talking about here and we all know what we have to do to fix it. So are we going to do anything about it?

Well we haven't so far. All that happens is that those amongst us with a more sensible head stay on the ground, whilst the rest of us continue to throw ourselves into the melee convinced we are having fun. It can't go on. Somebody will get hurt again and the fun is being sucked out of flying for the majority.

We all have to:

- Think about safety, not only our own but that of others
- If it is crowded, limit our airtime, give somebody else a go, be LESS SELFISH
- Talk to others about the issues and make sure they also start to think and behave in a less selfish manner
- Be satisfied with 30 minutes of pleasant flying rather than 60 minutes of flying dodgems. Encourage others to think the same way



- Let selfish pilots know they are behaving in a selfish manner, they may be unaware
- Go home reflecting on the fun we've had, not the list of narrow escapes we got away with

You are probably thinking, yep all makes sense, but it doesn't really apply to me as I'm happy flying in the crowds, I can cope. Well the next person can't, stop thinking only of yourself, this ain't a Sonic Attack (ref: for all aging hippies out here).

OK, so I've ended up ranting, but you know it makes sense. Things have been getting out of hand and pilots have been killed. We don't want that to happen to any of our members and more than that, we all just wanna have fun.....

Chris Jones

Chief Coach



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# A 'SIV' IN OLU DENIZ

Simon Chippendale

It seems to me that paragliding is inherently dangerous, firstly because the energy needed to stay up has to be constantly harvested from such an erratic and unpredictable and invisible source, local airflow, and secondly because people will always make mistakes, and making two or three paragliding errors in a row can cause a serious incident. In an attempt to compensate for a perceived lack of natural talent I have a safety strategy of setting limits, so I only fly within narrow boundaries, no wing higher than an EN B, no unfamiliar sites, no XC, no more than half bar, no mountain flying, no flying abroad. But last year I heard myself say, more than once actually, 'I've never had a big asymmetric'. I'm respectful enough of the fates to know that you shouldn't tempt them to throw wobblers at you, so then I felt obliged to do something about learning how to manage collapses, chaos, stalls. A SIV course was the obvious thing, so I chose Jocky Sanderson's SIV in Turkey. Because he's been doing it successfully for 20 years, because his course was one of the earliest in the year, because his name is legend in the world of SIV. Chosen with some apprehension as the trip involved too many things outside my comfort zone, and it was always going to be about flying where things go (deliberately) wrong. I don't suppose I would have considered doing a course if I hadn't already blown it by tempting the fates so clearly. There again, it was an enticing and exciting prospect, the flying was bound to be memorable.

So I booked the course, hotel, flights, transfers, bought a reserve, then bought a new harness because my original had a horrible reserve placement, tried out a few forward launches at Westbury when the wind dropped light enough. There, ready and off. The flying kit just squeezed under FlyThomasCooke's weight limit, the plane was on time, transfers worked, so far so good.

There were a dozen people on the course, which seems just right - I have a theory that 12 is the maximum size for a coherent group of people where everyone knows what everyone's up to. Bright and early Saturday morning we met up on the terrace at the Flying Dutchman hotel. Jocky started with a general outline of the course, how it'll be building up gradually from B-lines, big ears, big big ears, collapses, right through to stalls and spiral dives by day four, and then a few local XC's. Jocky explained that he doesn't want to train robots who will just follow radio instructions, so he'll thoroughly explain each manoeuvre at the briefing and then in the air he'll tell us which one to do next and let us get on with it, unless it goes wrong. And he's brilliant at the explaining - he's at the end of a big long table, us on benches along each side, and he's boosted up on a tall bar stool so that you can see what his arms and body are doing, and all the time he's telling us about the piloting, he's living it, he's weightshifting, his arms are working up and down on the brakes, he's flying. Your body learns easier by imitating than by decoding the meanings out of words - my arms could understand what Jocky's arms were doing. To show flight dynamics he has one fist as the pilot and the other arm curved as the wing and you can see the pilot's inertia and the wing's agility pulling the system around in fluid 3-D. It's so clear, what's happening.

Then it's into the truck, a big old crew-cab with a tilt over the pick-up bed, wings on the roof rack. Babadag mountain is directly behind Olu Deniz so there's only a mile of highway before we're labouring up the narrow stony road all the way from sea-level to the lowest T/O at 1700m. It had been sunny at the seaside, but this is a vertical mile away, and it's cold and blowing and dripping wet and you can't see anything through the thick cloud. Flying Babadag, you have to pick your moment. At that height, cloud on or below take off is a constant possibility, and you need light or nil winds. Jocky doesn't do continual arranging and then cancelling, so if he's not definite he doesn't arrange anything. Until we realised that, some of us felt under-informed.

In the following week we go up the mountain again and again. Briefing at the Flying Dutchman, then into the truck. The journey starts with banter and laughs, at 3000ft it tones down, at 4000ft it's gone quiet and at 5000ft you're separately focussing on the business to come. The steep slippery gritty stony take-offs are being paved with a clever system of interlocking blocks, all three will be paved by now. A great improvement, but beware - the new surface is like harsh sandpaper, it wears straight

through anything scraped on it. On the first take-off I realised that I didn't have a clue about forward launching. My practising at Westbury had been in very light winds where on a forward launch the wing is pretty much flying before you've gone a few yards, a doddle compared to short steep crowded zero wind take-offs where you have to lift the wing as you run it up to faster than stall speed. The first few times I worked my way through all the ways you can get a forward launch wrong. In the end I ran out of new ways to mess up and after that the launches were fine. Actually the breakthrough was a bit grimmer than that. I was on the short '1800' T/O which has a slippery loose stone face quickly steepening into a 60ft sheer drop to the road, there was no wind at all to give the wing some shape before getting up speed and I'm thinking 'I've messed up too many times, I've got to get this right, right now, or else I'll be in Fethyr hospital with a broken arm and it'll be the end of SIV for me'. So I got very determined and it went fine. I'd advise anyone to get competent at nil wind launches before they go, a crowded mountain take-off is no place to learn.

After take-off it's a mile and a half or so to get you out over the bay where Jocky's boat is. A still calm ten minute glide from the mountain to the sea, time to settle yourself, get focussed, and then as the previous pilot ends his wing-overs and lands on the beach, Jocky gets you into position and you burn off 4500ft with stalls, spins, collapses, then run off the last few hundred feet with wing-overs. Ten minutes of that is very exciting, so that by the time you've landed on the beach, you're well pumped up. After a bit you're calm enough to sit down and you can be the audience instead of the show. After a few days the twice daily hit of adrenaline gets you permanently buzzing, it's not a relaxing holiday by the seaside.

The manoeuvres went as the books said they would, letting up the relevant brake allows the wing to fly, lots of weightshift counters a turn, the brakes control the surge. After SIV your body remembers, it's a deeper and more relevant understanding than knowing in your brain. How it feels, how powerful the surge is, how quickly things happen. Jocky explained that if you brake one side to turn a wing, the first thing that happens is the angle of attack instantly goes up on that side because you've moved the chord line down at the back, so that side gives more lift, banking the wing so that it turns you the opposite way. Only later does the drag effect cut in to yaw the wing in the intended direction. So he says apply a bit of brake to both sides to make the wing rock back, then release, and as the wing rocks forward and dives, apply inputs which will be immediately effective. He calls this 'dynamic', so the collapses we do are from trim, then dynamic, then on full bar. I was surprised what a non-event collapses can be, even a 70% asymmetric on full bar was quick and easy to recover. Bearing in mind, this is on a modern EN 'B'. As we got more confident, Jocky had us doing bolder stuff, such as 'yank one A-riser down to make a big asymmetric, hold it down and shift all your weight to the low side for 360 degrees then let up'. A big rolling dive is what you get without the weightshift to keep you straight, that's how not to do it. Spins, a bit of a different matter. Jocky had said fly straight and level at trim, then bury one brake, let the glider turn 90 degrees, let up. But the manoeuvre was called 'Search for spin' so at 90 degrees I kept on holding the brake way down, I hadn't found spin yet. At 130 degrees the wing went very suddenly, and I have a clear mental snapshot of the wing twisting at the sea/sky horizon well off to my right. You get a big surge to deal with after you've been above the wing. Stalls were OK, that unmistakeable feeling of falling backwards. Jocky says that if you release the very first time that the wing comes forward, you'll only lose 150/200ft. He says that the longer you hold the stall in, the more chance of a cravat, a series of stalls and recoveries should look like a falling leaf. I was amazed at how hard I had to pull on the brakes on my Sport 4 when gradually applying them deeper and deeper, searching for stall.

With the full SIV completed we did some small XC's. Rather limited by too much lift, not enough lift. I took an easy thermal to close on 10,000ft, a lot of height, especially as the ground below is near sea level, before Jocky called me out of it, concerned I might end up in the cloud. Apart from that, a lot of floating along like a pudding at minimum sink, fine views of sea and mountains.

Other than from the mountain tops and in the air I didn't see much of Turkey. Olu Deniz is a generic Mediterranean beach resort with friendly Turks, clear sea, fine sand beaches, full English breakfasts in the cafes, everything seems to cost about £4. It's a paragliding town, with tandem rides and free

fliers constantly floating past a few feet above the electric wires criss-crossing the main street on their way to beach landings. The real Turkey starts just a few miles back from the coast.

Briefings are at the Flying Dutchman hotel where Jocky, Chris and half of those on the course stayed. I stayed at the Sugar Beach Hotel which is half a mile from town next to the lagoon's beach. Sugar Beach has simple wooden cabins with showers, air conditioning and wi-fi. The cabins are for two but I wasn't charged a single person supplement. Late into the evenings it's still loud in town, but at Sugar Beach it all goes quiet before 9pm and you get a peaceful night's sleep.

So did I learn the lessons? A few days after getting back I was circling in a narrow thermal above Mere and I poked one side of the wing out into the sink, and all the lines went slack on one side. During SIV all the collapses are from level flight, no brake, but here I found my arm wanted to get the wing controlled and since you can't push with string, my hand was reluctant to release the brake I had been holding in. I had to will it up, it didn't come naturally. Weightshift and braking the surge came easily and instinctively after SIV.

All in all, a lot of fun with a random bunch of convivial pilots, a very safety conscious and well thought-through course from Jocky and Chris, a friendly Turkish resort, lots of adrenaline. £1600 well spent.

Simon Chippendale



# Carry On Up The Dasklip!

Rob Kingston



*It was yet another beautiful warm evening spent, in the usual way, sitting out on the veranda around the braai, trying to imagine just what animals were making which of the many noises coming from the darkness. Sharing the first of many bottles of wine with the other guys in our group you had to pinch yourself to believe that this was actually the middle of December. Above was the most beautiful South African night sky imaginable, and as the full moon gradually rose to the accompaniment of Pink Floyd's 'Shine on you Crazy Diamond', it was easy to let your mind wander back to the events of the day just gone by..*

The vario is screaming and I'm locked into perhaps the tightest core I've ever been in. I hang on to it for all I'm worth as it rockets me up to 6000feet and back over Bumpy. I've become very familiar with the routine by now; take off near the Dasklip Pass above Porterville, work your way north along the ridge for 20km which could be achieved simply by gliding and topping up with a bit of height every now and then, and then catching a proper climb either at Teenage or Bumpy. Out to the west are the flatlands of corn fields, now cropped as it is approaching the middle of summer, and the scene of yesterday's playground for a 50km flight to goal where reliable thermals could be easily found. A day when cloud base was at over 8000 ft, it was often hard not to go up and when the only time things looked dire I still managed to climb out from just fifty feet above the ground. However today it was a return to flying the ridge and going over the back into the lush Citrusdal valley, famed for its oranges and lemons, which is bounded by the mighty Cedarberg mountains and distinctly uninviting boonies. Bumpy was the normal spot for me to gain height but also usually the place to get roughed up a bit, as the rocky gullies leading up to the summit funnel thermals from the plains and this meeting place makes for some pretty turbulent air, but the fact that it's always going up is never in any doubt. I'd made the glide into the valley three times previously, the first time was on the very first days flying, when I found myself alone and arrived over Citrusdal town (40km from takeoff) with plenty of height and had to just hang about for others to catch me up – they never did and I landed as I had no idea where I should be going. The next time I was flushed down in heavy sink behind Bumpy, not even managing to cross the river in the middle of the valley, and then another day it all went so smoothly to Citrusdal but then I could get no further. I also discovered that

landing near the township was a mixed blessing, fantastic to see so many smiling faces but not so relaxing when hundreds of kids 'have' to pack up your glider for you. I was determined that today would be different, and that I would just wave to the kids as I flew over head!



*The main ridge at Porterville looking north towards Bumpy Peak (middle distance), with the Citrusdal valley to the right.*

The tactical advantage I've got today is that Chris White is flying with me (actually I've latched on to him and I'm not going to let him out of my sight) and Chris is a thermal finding maestro (Chris and Jocky Sanderson are the fly guides on the trip). We spread out on the glide into the valley and everything that should work does work (don't you just love it when that happens), and we top up our height as we circle over the town. You can't mistake this place as the name 'CITRUSDAL' is spelt out in large stones on the hillside (presumably as a clue for lost Paraglider pilots), next to the permanently burning rubbish tip above the township. I wave to the kids and know that they must feel cheated as they're not getting any sweets from me today!



*A fellow pilot and happy helpers*



From now on it's all new to me, not so for Chris who has been past here twice previously. The route is north towards the 'Constriction' at the head of the valley, now flying with the prevailing southerly wind at our backs and hopefully, if the sea breeze hasn't pushed in, past the lakes and onto Clan William for 100km+. That was the theory anyway.

The immediate objective is to reach the 'Happy Hillocks', nothing more than a few lumps in a huge landscape, but they manage to put a big smile on our faces as they yield a slow but smooth climb that enables us to push on our way towards Constriction. Having arrived here we are both struggling to find our next decent climb and (not surprisingly as the valley narrows significantly) the wind speed has increased alarmingly. We carry on a bit further but soon realise that conditions are getting marginal and decide to land in a small 'grassy' field; it's either that or the river bed. At the last moment on my approach I realise it's not grass at all but a field of water melons but I somehow manage to land without stepping on any. Two cars come driving up the dirt road throwing great plumes of dust behind them, the first I recognise as one of our retrieve vehicles but the other turns out to be the farmer. Fortunately he's glad to see us; he's never had pilots land in his field before and has brought his sons up to see what is going on, and since the melons are ripe and are going to be picked the very next day anyway he presents us with a prize specimen. A 65km XC, a personal best for me, and a melon to boot – you couldn't have dreamt of anything better. Well maybe.... if I had arrived at Constriction a bit earlier it might have been slightly less windy and then I could have climbed out high over Clan William Dam and then over the town. From there I would have to decide whether to track northwards straight over the boonies or take the safer roundabout route – either way 150km would beckon. Well you can dream!

*The embers of the braai are still flickering, and despite the size of the group we have only managed to eat half of the melon, but than again there is always breakfast. A noise from the rocks just above has us speculating as to the origin – Baboon is the consensus view. The forecast for tomorrow is good, high cloudbase and winds not too strong. I wonder, it would be nice to see Clan William .....*



*Chris White and the author with their prize*

## **Travel and retrieve**

I travelled to Porterville, SA on an Escape/ Jocky Sanderson organised trip, December 2010. This is Summer and daytime temperatures are typically 30 degrees C, but can go into the 40's. Porterville is approximately three hours easy driving from Cape Town on good roads, that become dirt roads near Porterville. Normal cars (preferably with Air Con) are fine even for the dirt roads. We were a group of 12 and had three cars of various sizes (which could be fitted with inflatable roof racks, brought from the UK, for carrying paragliders). Each day of the two weeks one person took it in turns to be the designated retrieve driver who wouldn't fly on that day (or acted as wind dummy). They were responsible for taking any early bomb-out babes back to launch, and from then on once they had picked up the first two landed pilots they would then get the other two cars making a retrieve crew of three. This arrangement worked well and, with good roads, retrieves were relatively painless. Typically pilots would meet up at one of the bars in Citrusdal (if we were flying into that valley), and wait there while other pilots were retrieved. Despite some early unease about this arrangement it actually worked rather well, probably because of the reliability of the conditions, and many (myself included) were glad of a 'day off' after a week or so of solid flying.

## **The Flying**

Flying conditions at this time of year are reliable but strong. We used the new take off at Pampoenfontein (small daily fee) which is situated above the Dasklip Pass (and at c.3000ft is significantly higher than that T/O). The road to Dasklip is tarmac and then dirt to the T/O. Take off would generally be from 11.00 as it would often (apparently) be too strong to launch after 1.00pm. The take-off faces west and is located on the main Porterville ridge that runs South to North. The large netted launch area means that T/O is straight forward. Reliable thermals trigger off the rocks to the right or the gully to the left. It makes for wonderful evening flying as well. We stayed in cottages on the farm behind T/O where they grow Proteas (the national flower), and because of the altitude the evenings are a nice temperature. There are also some great lakes there for swimming.

Depending on the day you can fly the ridge either to the north or south, go north and cross over into the Citrusdal valley and then push north towards Clan William and onwards, or fly the flatlands out front. Landing out is not really a problem, the fields are massive and flat, you just don't want to end up with too big a walk out and so landing near a road is the main priority. To the East of Citrusdal the mountains get large and the area remote and boonified. Plenty of water, suntan cream and a large floppy hat are also essential.

You must become a member of the SA Paragliding Association. I used Greg Hammerton's guidebook on flying in S/A which although not essential is very informative.

If you are thinking of flying down near the Cape you should contact some of the locals there, who are not only friendly but they can give you a thorough (and essential) briefing on flying in the area which has some of the strangest air flow you can imagine!

## **Other bits and pieces**

Food is about half the price of that in the UK and the supermarkets stock a good selection. You are in the Western Cape wine lands area and hence wine is plentiful, cheap and of excellent quality.

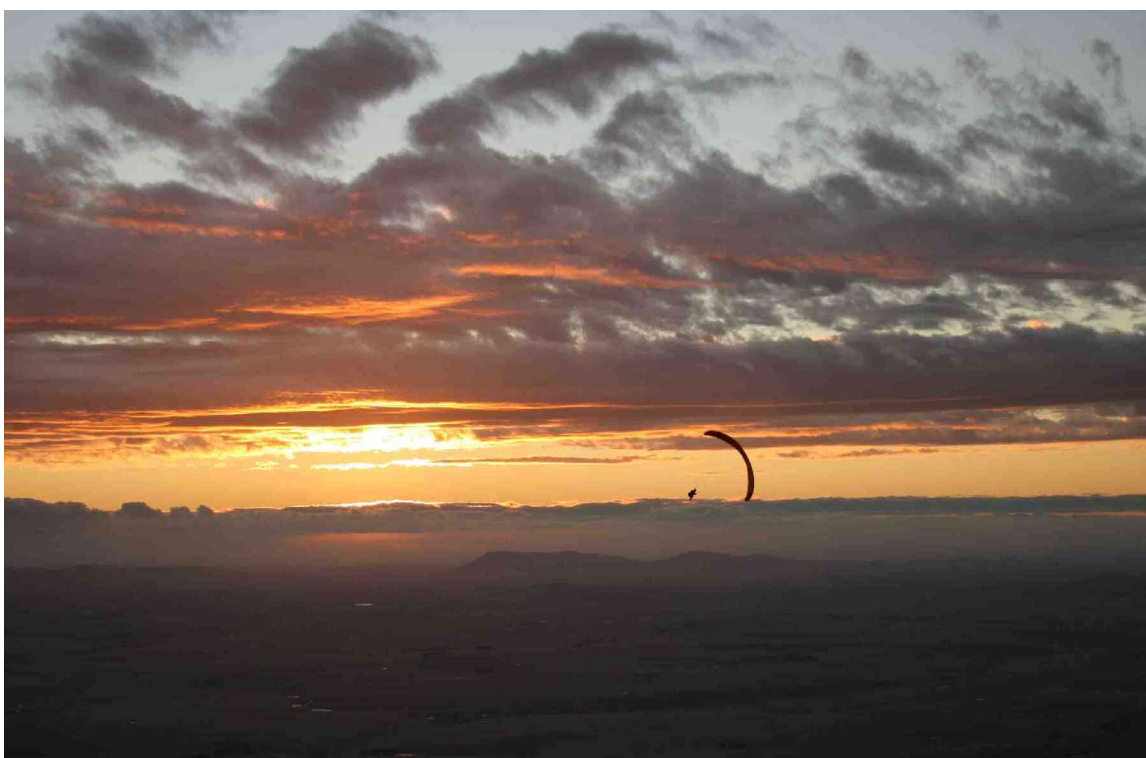
Porterville is pleasant but nothing more and in my mind it was far preferable staying out of town.



*Not everything is as it seems. Porterville high street and confused pilots*

Take an unlocked mobile phone and buy a local SIM card.

Rob Kingston





# In Site: Beer Head

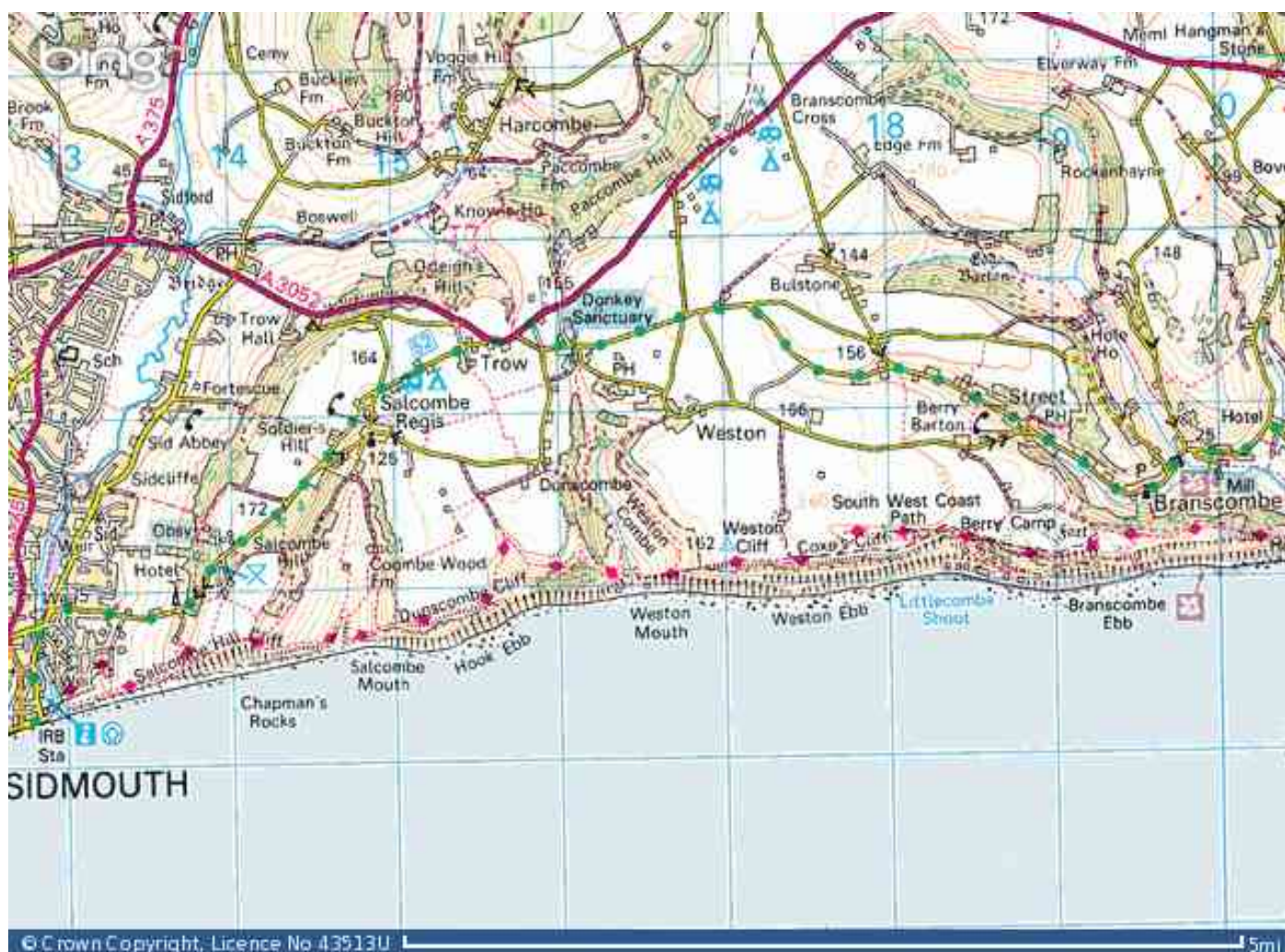
In this new series we look at different flying sites not in the Avon area. First off is Beer and there is nothing frothy about the head on this one. It is a very family friendly area, with the pebble beach at Beer being very attractive, and with many walks and touristy things to do.

Beer Head is a magnificent coastal site located near Sidmouth on the South Coast. It needs the wind to be virtually due south to work well (SSW-SSE), and when it does it can give classic flying. It is a Devon and Somerset Condors open site and their sites-guide should be consulted for the latest access information before flying there:

<http://www.dscondors.co.uk/Content/Sites/Site.aspx?SiteName=BeerHead>







Take off is on a grassy slope which leads straight over a fence and onto a 200 ft cliff; daunting but simple on a PG, it must be character building on a hangie! (The take-off further to the west of Branscombe is a Condor's only site.) To the right of T/O is a pinnacle (the 'Stack') which must be avoided as it generates significant rotor behind it, either by gaining sufficient height above T/O or flying out front of it. If you do go down it is simple to pack up on the beach in front of the stack (PG) and walk back up the path through the landslip area and back to T/O. It is also straight forward to top land in the large field just behind T/O.

With the cliffs on this coast rising to 500ft large height gains are possible, and in good conditions the cruise along to Sidmouth is simple, but never dull as there are several gaps to be crossed en route. The classic out and return to Sidmouth is 20km and is a superb run over a very scenic part of the coast, with a landable beach pretty much the whole way. If the wind has a bit of East then from Sidmouth it is possible to push down towards Ladram Bay, although bottom landing options then start to decrease. With some west in the wind some significant flights have been done, for instance jumping back from Beer Head to Seaton and going east onto Lyme Regis and then past West Bay (the best, I believe on a PG, being to Swyre – but on a hang-glider you could continue and probably fly the ridge above Abbotsbury, go past Hardy's monument, onto the White Horse hill at Weymouth and connect with the coast again at Ringstead).



*Looking west from Beer Head towards Sidmouth some 10km away (you can see the continuous stretch of largely non-tidal pebble beach). The T/O is top right (you can just make out someone getting ready to launch). The 'stack' is middle left just above the pebble beach. The path back to T/O (if you go down) is just beyond the stack. The first open area beyond the white cliffs is Branscombe Mouth which you can drive to (HG retrieve) - there is an excellent cafe there as well.*



*Flying high above Sidmouth. Ladram bay (and its caravan park) is to the left of the big hill in the background, and needs some east in the wind to reach it. Also the landing options aren't so great over there – especially at H/T.*



If the wind is too far off for flying Beer Head then there are some other options not too far away; Sandymouth (East of Exmouth) takes a SE'ly, whilst Eype (near West Bay) will take a SW'ly (note that Charmouth is a Condor's only site).



*Watch out for orographic cloud pushing in as this can very quickly ruin your day.*

What a magnificent place and only one and a half hours drive from your house – what are you waiting for?

Next time we'll include another 'must fly' site. I'm on the look out for any suggestions and preferably someone to put together an 'in-Site' review of their choice of site together with some pictures.

# November Caption Competition



The last Caption Competition featured Tim trying out his new pod harness for size helped by Rod and Richard.

The winner was Richard Danbury :

Rod: "Hey, come and look at this - I've never seen one this colour!"

Tim: "Look, it really hurts. Just ease the zip down when I press on the speed bar."

Richard: "You're on your own - I'm not going anywhere near that!"

This month: Thanks to Ben Friedland for providing the photo of Paddy who is obviously up to something – but what? Any ideas should be sent to the [editor@avonhgpg.co.uk](mailto:editor@avonhgpg.co.uk)





## And Finally ....

When pressed on the subject of 'whatever happened to the winch?' Geoff said that all it needed was a bit of grease and it would be as good as new...



