

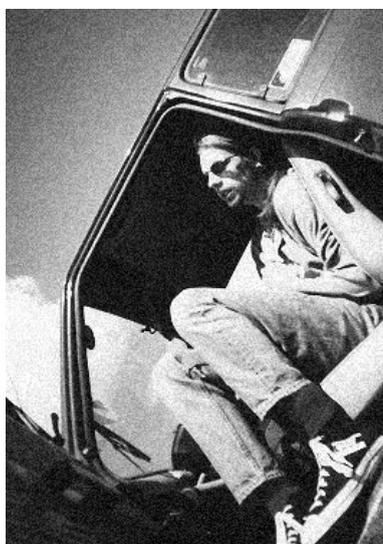
NOVA

AVON  Hang Gliding and  
Paragliding Club

# Newsletter



## September 1997



### Editors Bit

Well Autumn is drawing near but the end of September is proving to be pretty glorious. I went up to the Malverns for the first time on Sunday (well apart from a blown out visit earlier this year). Rob Davies skyed out just after we got there but I wanted to check the rules. The sky was looking good as Rob left. Later it blued out but both Fiona Macaskill and I got away making 4 out of 6 gliders on the hill going XC. I only made about 10km, but Fiona did 26km and Rob did an amazing 65km, congratulations you... and takes my 4<sup>th</sup> place in the XC league well that is until this weekend ☺ I understand Richard Harding, Simon Kerr and others were having an excellent time in SE Wales as well, meanwhile that skygod Tim B who looks well on his way to a Nationals place was out on a bicycle ride, "coz it looked to be howling". See it even happens to the best of them. It looks like the rest of the week was good with Fiona getting a few more XCs under her belt, and finding time to do some filming with HTV. It makes you feel sick really doesn't it, being stuck in the office while all this is going on, roll

on the weekend...

The October meeting will be a video night, see elsewhere. I hope you can attend as Chris has spent some time organising it. The November meeting will again be the AGM if you want to get involved come along, it's about time we saw some new faces on the committee. Give a committee member a ring if you want to know more about the committee

Well See you on the hill. ✍

Marcus

### Nova on the Web

You'll find an online version of Nova at <http://www.skytribe.force9.net> This contains news and up to date XC results as well as some of the articles from the magazine with colour photos. The site is now frame based and includes links to many other flying related sites, both in the UK and abroad. So point your browser at the site and check it out. PS if you have anything you want to see on the site or have something to contribute drop me a line.

**NOVA**

**October Meeting  
Video Evening See Next Page for Full Details**

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### September Meeting

The September meeting was fairly well attended, and proved to be an interesting evening with talks by Tim Brunskill, Neil Atkinson and Sean Warlock. Tim and Neil talked about their flight from Ubley last year, which turned from a bit of a non starter day to an epic 88km flight. Sean talked about his first experiences in competition during the Airwave Challenge, which I hoped encouraged more people to get involved in the comp scene. Thanks to the speakers for an entertaining and educational night.

### October Meeting

#### Video Night

**Tuesday October 7<sup>th</sup>  
The Griffin Inn, Warmley**

October's meeting will be a Video Night. We'll have some of the latest hang-gliding and paragliding videos especially rented from Sky Systems for the night. This will be your only chance to see them so don't forget to turn up. Radio Rentals have kindly offered to supply us with a TV and video for the night for free, well done Radio Rentals.

### November Meeting

**Will be the AGM!!!! So start thinking about joining the committee, and make sure you are there, as usual we hope to provide food etc to entice you along.**

### January Meeting

Pencil the 6th in your diaries, it is hoped that Bob Drury who wrote the reason article in Skywings about his trip to the Himalaya will be coming to give a talk on this trip, He apparently has loads of slides, so it should be an interesting evening. More details later

### Novice News Well Sort Of

Hello All,

Is anyone interested in organising a group flying holiday somewhere warm this October/November/December? If so, please give me a call on 0117971 9380 (Eves) or 0966 491138 (Orange).

Rich Harding

## First Impressions of the Exxtacy Hang-glider from Flight Design

In case you aren't aware the Exxtacy is the new "rigid wing" from the German company Flight Design. It is based around a carbon composite cantilever wing. It is controlled in pitch by weight shift and in roll by spoilers attached to the top surface and activated by weight shifting a conventional A-frame. In addition to spoilers it has flaps on the inner trailing edge of the wing. This should allow for L/D ratios from 17.5:1 down to 5:1 with the flaps fully extended.



At first I was concerned that it would not be suited to the small sites we have in the UK. But I needn't have worried, it is well suited to our small windy hills and isn't the unturnable, unlaunchable, unlandable monster some where expecting.

For my first flight the day was far from epic, and the site was a small one that I would normally avoid flying - Milk Hill. The day was ridge soarable in about 10 - 18 mph of wind.

First up I flew my own glider whilst Christoph from Flight Design flew the Exxtacy. I was kind of disappointed that he didn't get any higher than me. I was hoping that a better sink rate would show up in the ridge lift. This earlier part of the day was good for a cloudy day on this site, with 400' feet above the hill on offer in ridge lift and weak thermal.

Where the Exxtacy did shine was on the glide, granted we didn't do much of it, but one incident stands out. I'd cored a weak blob to 550' (see I am talking weak here :- ) Christoph flew in under me and took the thermal to the same height but about 100 yards downwind. By this time I was pulling forward out in front of the hill. I glanced back just to check that he wasn't still climbing :- ) and saw him gliding in my direction at about the same height as me. I continued to glide out. He flew over the top of me with about 100-150' of extra height. Quite impressive in the minimalist conditions we were flying in.

The wind then switched slightly and 100' above 500 feet was a good height, also the pg's started to fly making things very restrictive indeed. I waited hoping I'd not lost my chance of a flight.

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Eventually things started to lift a bit and I nervously launched hoping it all worked as advertised. My first mistake was not flying with my own vario. The seemingly random beeping of Christophs told me nothing in my tense state. But it flew, and it flew well, I 360 under a Kiss that appeared to be thermalling but neither of us went up, but the turn co-ordinated easily. It was a short flight as the lift soon died and I was keen to try the landing. I top landed into an easy 10 mph with full flaps - no bother. I was relieved. It hadn't been much of a flight but I was looking forward to going up again, this time with my own trusty Lindsay vario.

30 minutes later I was off again and soon was above the four other gliders scratching the hill. Maybe it does have a better sink rate. This time I was relaxed and found it really fun to fly. On occasion I'd over bank a turn but it soon came back. I was pleased to see that I could turn just as tight as on my RamAir (admittedly not the easiest glider to roll). Rain soon put an end to my second brief flight but I was impressed, very impressed.

The next time I got to fly it was in Wales on Merthyr Common, a much bigger site with a mile of ridge and lots of sky to play with. It was quite a thermic day, typically rowdy for Merthyr. A good test.

It was blowing 20+mph on launch but the Exxtacy was easy to ground handle, which is good as there are no side-wires for a ground-crew to grab. The spoilers automatically correct any wing-lift with minimum input from the pilot. Weird from a British view point was that glider must for all practical purposes be rigged on the A frame. This kind of thing doesn't come easily to us Brits. But unlike a conventional HG there is little flex in the wing, so being turned edge-on to the wind doesn't stress the sail to the same degree as a "normal" HG. Once rigged, with a harness weighting the upwind tip slightly, the glider sat calmly in the 20 mph wind.



Launch was again easy and once in the air I soon lost any thought that I was flying anything strange, it was all so familiar and easy. Shift your weight and it turns, just like hang-gliders should but often don't! Pitch was light with a slightly vague feel to it at speed.

I couldn't say that it climbs better than anything else in thermals but that may just be down to my technique, time will tell. With only 30 minutes air-time on it I was climbing as well as I would have on my Ram on which I have 150 hours.

I was first to cloud-base at 2400 ato by taking the thermals back behind the hill and easily gliding forward. I've no ASI so I've no idea at what speed I was gliding, but the straps on my Keller Hi-Tech harness were vibrating annoyingly, something they have never done before. Must get an ASI.

Flying was stress free, very little effort was required to initiate a turn but a little high-siding was needed on occasion to maintain the correct bank angle. There was an almost complete absence of yaw.

On top-landing I used full flaps but found I had to adjust them on approach as I was in danger of undershooting. Adjusting the flaps required flying one-handed but this wasn't much of a problem as the glider continued to fly straight. Try that on a Kiss!

I'd be interested to here how Exxtacys land in nil wind. The stall is "deep" rather than the usual - nose down type. My guess is this reduces the tendency to nose-whack, but that's just a guess. I'm not keen to try a nil winder just yet.

In all I had about three hours air-time, the final flight a simple ridge soar in 15 mph evening winds. It was easy to stay 100' above the three other hang-gliders in the air so maybe the sink rate is slightly better. Usually me and the Ram are somewhere near the middle of the pack.

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Comments from other pilots later was that the glide looked fantastic and that they were left standing for speed. Maybe the manufacturer's 17.5:1 figure is accurate, I'm normally sceptical of such claims but I think it can't be far off. They also commented that it looks so smooth when turning in thermals, and I must say it was real easy to maintain a nice flat circle.



Everybody on the hill that day had a good flight but I had the biggest grin. The worst part is that the glider isn't mine and I have to give it back soon. The waiting list is two to three months.

There is a downside, the weight - about 40 Kg and - the bulk in the bag. When rigged the weight is not a problem, but it is very awkward to man-handle in its bag by yourself. Folded it is about the size of two conventional hang-gliders side-by-side. I have managed to get it on and off my Trooper by myself, and onto the rack in my garage, so with a bit more muscle and better technique it shouldn't prove too much of a hassle.

Then there is the possibility of damage. It has to be treated with much more care than your average HG pilot is used to giving his/her wing. The carbon loops at the nose could easily be fatigued if the glider was banged on the ground whilst still in the bag. And those leading edges...Umm a new ball game I think.

The sail work looked good, helped by the very simple cut required by the design, but whoever cut out the stick-on logo and lettering should be given a new pair of scissors and some reading glasses! Overall the quality is well up to scratch, though it doesn't quite have the WW or Airwave level of detailing.

Pilots interested in a demo flight should contact Paravion on 01672 861380. Chris Jones

## Mendip tow group invites visitors

After a year of operation the Mendip Tow Group feels able to offer hang-gliding winch launching to a limited number of Avon Club members on weekends when it is not possible to fly from an Avon hill site. If any tow-rated pilot wishes to go winching give Geoff Rogers a ring between 8:30 and 9:00 am on a suitable weekend - (01761) 232096. Please note that the group is not able to train pilots who do not already have a winch endorsement.

## Club Coaching Course

The Devon and Somerset Condors are hosting a club coaching course down in Upottery (just south of Taunton) on November the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Any pilots interested in improving their skills and their ability to coach others is invited to attend. Attendees should have a minimum of ten hours. As on previous occasions the club will pay the course fee for any member who acquires a club coach rating.

Interested pilots should contact Harriet Pottinger on 01823 601202

## Fiona in Piedrahita

*More From Our Roving European Reporter*

Piedrahita ... here we are again ... this is my fourth year of competing in Piedrahita. British Nationals one year, Spanish Open another, PWC three times - a great site, great weather, great distances, great people, you name it, its got it.

I arrived in my camper-van from Chamonix in a heavy rain storm after 28 hours of what seemed like non-stop driving on my own (except for when I picked up a hitch hiker who managed to get a 700 mile lift with me!). The weather was 'not typical' - I'd heard that one before, but certainly I had never worn a jumper and trousers in Piedrahita before - no, the weather was not typical - only two days earlier the Swedish Nationals had preceded their flying with a snow-ball fight on take-off. I was glad I had bought a spare sleeping bag in my camper-van 'just in case'. It was absolutely freezing.

If you want good tasks, get Steve Ham to be the Technical Director. He understands the weather, conditions and how to get the best out of a day's flying better than anyone in this neck of the woods and, despite five days of an unusual easterly wind, he made us feel we had all got the maximum out of the comp.

Tasks ranged from 65 km cat's cradles around the huge valley in front of take off, to out and returns. One day (much to Steve's regret) he declared an open distance thinking we'd be lucky to go 25 km - by the end of the day I saw him hopping from one foot to the other because he had not told pilots to take their passports with them in case they ended up in Portugal! The lead gaggle were within 30 km of the border when they had to adhere to the 8.00 p.m. 'land-by' time. John Pendry (later to become the overall winner) and Steve Senior were forced to end their 133km flight by big-earing down - The retrieve bus did not get back till 4.00am, but all pilots were still ready for the 11.00am briefing the next day.

I learnt several things when flying in Piedrahita this year. One was that eating when flying is very refreshing, especially after 3 or 4 hours in the air. I waited for a good moment to try and have my snack - a good long glide from 3000m to the next thermal seemed like the best opportunity ... I managed to get my pre-opened chocolate-coated crunchy bar out of my flight deck - no problem ... getting the rest of the wrapper off (wearing gloves) - not too difficult ... putting it in my mouth (under or over the full face helmet mouth protection?) - just possible - eating it ... great - I felt much better and was prepared for another hour or so in the air. That was the first time I had ever tried to eat when flying and was looking forward to future mid-air snacks.

The next day I prepared the chocolate bar as I had the day before - only this time I thought that two bars would be twice as good as one. The same procedure, hunger at height, glide, bar in hand ... oh dear - where was the glider I was flying only seconds before? - I had a full collapse and had to use both hands to grab the brake lines and recover - this was not what I had expected and saw my delicious chocolate bar gently descend to terra firma to provide the local fighting bulls with what was supposed to be my in-flight refreshment - let's hope it helped to make them big and strong for their task in hand. I was grateful I had packed 2 bars that day and once well above the inversion I had previously encountered managed to consume bar no. 2 without further problems.

At long last, after flying a paralider for eight years, I feel I managed to put into practice what I've been learning over the last few months. Living in Chamonix, being coached by Dennis Trott, flying my wonderful XMX and dedicating a huge amount of time, thought and energy to the sport all came together for me in Piedrahita this year.

It was a particularly good competition for the Brits. John Pendry took first overall and Kat Tiefenthal took the first woman's trophy. I could hardly believe it when I was called up to collect the trophy for 3rd woman.

The only problem for me now is that I've got a taste for flying in competitions - I'm setting goals for the future that I would never have dreamt of a year ago. Coming back to live in England in September will be a hard move to make, but needs must. The kids have got to go back to English education and I really should bring some

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money into the family again - never mind, it's been a great year and it's not over yet - British Nationals in St Andre and PWCs in Morzine and Slovenia here we come!



## 1997 PG XC League

All sites/All pilots league (last updated 19/9/97)									
Rank	Name	Canopy	1	2	3	4	5	Total 5	Total all
1	Tim Brunskill	UP Escape	88.6	36.3	25.3	16.0	13.4	179.6	208.4
2	Graham Stephenson	Airwave Alto	56.5	55.3	20.8	14.7	13.0	160.4	186.0
3	Colin Hermon	Perche V-Max	48.2	41.7	25.7	21.1	18.3	155.0	230.0
4	Marcus King	UP Soul	32.0	25.6	21.0	14.6	9.7	102.9	102.9
5	Clive Laurence-Peckham	Swing Nimbus	25.3	22.8	22.4	15.9	14.5	101.0	101.0
6	Simon Kerr	UP Kendo	31.0	20.1	17.8	15.3	13.6	97.8	108.7
7	Tim Pentreath	Nova Sphinx	30.9	24.9	17.4	14.6	5.1	92.9	92.9
8	Mark Drake	Apco Extra	30.6	19.8	12.0	10.0	5.6	78.0	78.0
9	Amanda Laurence-Peckham	Swing Ventus	61.9	6.6				68.5	68.5
10	Robert Davis	Nova Xyon	28.0	14.6	8.4			51.0	51.0
11	Richard Harding	Firebird G-Sport	15.0	8.4	7.7	4.2	4.1	39.4	39.4
12	Dave McCarthy	Flight Design B3	19.3	4.9				24.2	24.2
13	Elly Milln	Airwave Voodoo	8.5	8.0	4.9	3.1		24.6	24.6
14	Brett Pullen	Apco Spectra	16.5					16.5	16.5
15	Alex Coltman	Apco Astra	7.1	5.8				12.8	12.8
16	Tim & Elly	UP Pickup	11.7					11.7	11.7
17	Alan Gibson	Edel Super Space	11.1					11.1	11.1
18	Jean Christophe Schrotter	Paratech P40	9.2					9.2	9.2
19	Mike Andrews	Trekking Esprit	3.4					3.4	3.4
<b>Total</b>								<b>1240.1</b>	<b>1380.4</b>

Another 240km added since last month - keep them coming in, only one month to go till the end of the league so hurry up! I've got to do at least a 15km flight in order to beat my 1996 top 5 score - fingers crossed!

Congratulations especially this month to Alex Coltman and Alan Gibson who are now off the mark with their first ever xc's - well done guys!

I've had some flights in from someone called Eddie Colfox - unfortunately they've been entered too late for inclusion into the league, but I promised him I'd mention them here: 68.6, 59.0, 39.6, 18.8, 18.2 which would actually put him in 1st place with 204km, but I'm afraid rules are rules ~~even~~ especially if you are a National's pilot! The whole point of the league is to provide ongoing competition and rivalry throughout the year for active club members, which is defeated if all the flights are entered in one go at the end of the season. Anyway, some excellent flights there but get them in on time next year please!

### A classic Lakes flight

I had a fantastic flight up in the Lakes during the Lakes Charity Classic comp at the end of August. After a wet Friday morning, and a v. breezy afternoon, we didn't quite believe the forecast for light sou'westerlies on Saturday. However, sure enough Saturday dawned bright with very light winds. Jocky sent us all (pg & hg) up to

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Jenkin Hill, which involved the mother of all climb-ups! I honestly don't know how the hg pilots made it up - serious determination and true grit!

At the top it was many degrees colder in quite breezy and somewhat cloudy conditions - it was so warm down in the campsite earlier that I think a lot of us were rather unprepared at the top. Initially a race to goal at Penrith was set, but when it became evident that the NW wind wasn't going to swing round to the SW, the goal was changed to Ambleside (25.4km), which would involve a 6km hop across to Clough Head then a 15km cruise down the side of Helvellyn, finished off with about a 4km glide to goal. All well and good in theory!

The trouble was that the conditions at take-off were none too pleasant. We were effectively in horizontal (as opposed to vertical) rotor coming off the side of Skiddaw. (Jenkin is a S to SW site, not a NW!) What most of us who took off reasonably early on did, was to take off and immediately glide down to Lattrigg which has a reasonable NW face. About 68 of us (Tim Brunskill & Clive Laurence-Peckham included) ended up ridge soaring there waiting for something decent to come through.

We waited..., and waited..., and waited... and eventually after about 45 mins for me (1.5 hrs for some others!) what turned out to be the one thermal of the day came through and we all got away. What a feeling as we left everyone else sitting up at Jenkin watching us with envy! Sorry folks, a question of being in the right place at the right time. Clough was booming when we arrived! I had my strongest ever UK thermal - I guess I was averaging 8-10 up for a couple of minutes...fantastic!

From there it was a relatively straightforward run down to Helvellyn where Tim B and I thermalled up to 4,400' and 4,100' respectively - the views in all directions were just mind-blowing, you really can't beat mountain flying! And from here it was again a relatively easy cruise down to Rydal ridge, but from here on in it wasn't so easy. The goal was in sight about 5km away, but the ridge ended here so it was a question of getting enough height and going for it. Clive was with Tim and me at this stage - he went with a thermal over the back to the next ridge (which ends slightly closer to goal) but got a serious trashing whilst doing so.

Tim and I opted to go the direct route once we had enough height. Not much was coming through now (I later realised the sea breeze was setting in from the SW), and it was clear that we'd have to do something pretty soon. I shouted across to Tim that I'd go as soon as I got 500' above the top. I actually got 1,000' shortly after, and left on the glide for goal, but I flew into some majorly sinking air and realised I had no choice but to turn back to the ridge again!

Meanwhile Tim, who had flown out into the valley, had found something nice and was now heading for goal 1,000' above me! (This scenario happens too often with Tim B - memories of our flight from the Malverns a month earlier were flooding back!). I then spent the next 30-45 minutes scratching around trying to just get back to ridge height, getting increasingly frustrated, knowing that Tim had probably made it to goal!

Eventually, with half an hour to go before the land-by time (6pm) I found myself about 200' above the ridge and decided it was now or never. I knew from the start that it was going to take a miracle (or Chris Jones' Exxtacy) to get me to goal and unfortunately I had neither! I squeezed between some trees to land on a football field 0.5km short of goal! Oh well - can't win them all!

I later discovered that I came 6th, out of only 8 people who made it as far as Clough Head - so a great day for a few of us, and an incredibly frustrating day for the other 50 pilots stuck at Jenkin/Lattrigg. In hindsight it was probably the wrong site to go to (especially for the hgs), but on the other hand four people made it to goal, with another three or four coming very close, so who knows?!

I don't know the exact scores, but the final order was:

- ?? 1st - Tony Delaney (I think that's right) (goal)
- ?? 2nd - James Ganderton (goal)
- ?? 3rd - Clive L-P (goal) - AVON
- ?? 4th - Tim B (goal) - AVON
- ?? 5th - don't know, but he can have only beaten me by 100m!
- ?? 6th - yours truly! (500m and quite alot of trees short!) - AVON
- ?? 7th - don't know
- ?? 8th - don't know

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### And finally...

I must go to bed now - it's 12:23am on Saturday 20th September, and I'm off to Asturias (northern Spain) later today so I hope the weather's crap here for the next two weeks! Only joking - hope you all get some good flying in! Keep sending me those xc's - remember the league finishes on 31st October.

Bye for now



Just a quick reminder of the rules:

1. Flights must be entered within 30 days of making the flight
2. A flight can only be entered if you are a full Avon member at the time of making the flight
3. Airspace restrictions must be observed during your flight - study an airmap before the flight and use one during the flight
4. Flights can be made from any UK site
5. Flights must be over 3 km
6. Witnesses are not required

So there you go - get out there and give it a go! I look forward to receiving details of your flights - Date, Canopy, Site, TO grid ref, LZ grid ref.

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## Hang Gliding XC League

Avon HG XC League							
Pilot	Glider	Flight 1	Flight 2	Flight 3	Flight 4	Flight 5	Total
Neil Atkinson		79.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>79.6</b>
Sean Worlock		53.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>53.1</b>
Colin Hale		14.9	6.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>20.9</b>

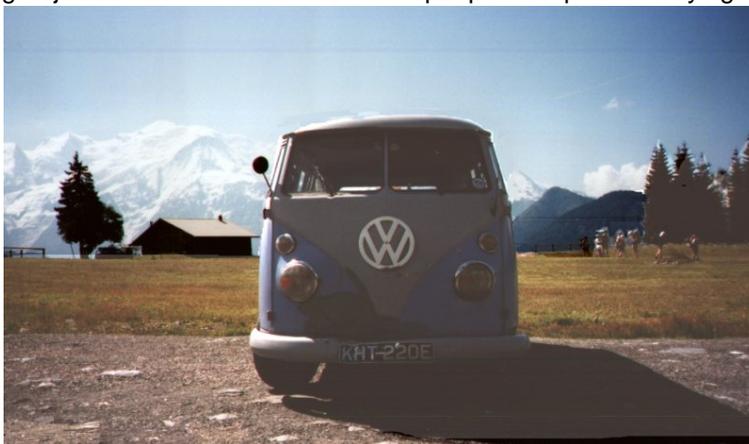
Distances in km

## Farmer Offers B&B

The farmer at the bottom of the Rifle Range is offering B&B. So if you know of any flyers or non-flyers visiting the area looking for a nice place to stay please recommend it to them.

## Going Flying with a VW Splitty

Thursday night and wind and rain were in abundance, heralding the start of yet another British competition. I should have known to turn back when the old Severn bridge was closed, but I drove over to South Wales for the SEW Open, and headed to the pub with Donna. Perhaps unsurprisingly there was hardly anyone around. The next day dawned overcast and still very windy. We arrived at the registration and found everyone in the café. Chris Short was looking dejected and said that at least 40 people had phoned saying they wouldn't be coming till the next day due to the weather. The rest of the day was spent drifting round the pubs of Crickhowell before returning to Donna's. The weather was again crap the next day and so we embarked on a treasure hunt around Wales, directed by Robin Marshall's cryptic notes, strangely the contingent did pretty well and came out joint first. We would have won apart from a couple of silly prizes were well found out later the rest of the day was guessed it, in the pubs of Crickhowell. That evening at the BBQ the treasure hunt winners were decided with a tug of war which we failed at miserably.



*The Splitty at Plaine Jous with Mt Blanc behind*

Sunday morning and we woke up in the BBQ field, and headed to the briefing. Amazingly, it seems, they were going to make us go to a hill, and yes finally we were all told to go and make Mrs C's day by filling up her field with cars. When we got there it was strong but definitely flyable, but still very overcast and not looking too promising for a task. We were treated to a display of Cage flying by the team from Nerveus who were staying with Steve Milsom, and very impressive it was to. Eventually a task was called a 26km race to goal near Cwmbran. People take off but there wasn't much lift as the wind was a bit off, it was all a bit crowded and rough. Three people managed to get away in what seemed to be cloud suck and amazingly Ans Khan nearly made it all the way to goal, however the task wasn't validated so my BPC year ends with a grand total of 'null points'.

We got going back to Bath as we had a ferry to catch at 3 the next morning in Dover. Donna decided not to come as she was feeling ill, a decision which I think she regrets as she broke her arm the next week and had a lay off of 6 weeks. The splitty was finally packed and we headed off down the motorway to Dover at the incredible speed of 45mph. Why 45mph? Simple the van had a new engine a couple of weeks before and we were still running it in. We made steady progress and got to the ferry with time to spare. On the other side we were soon trundling down the French motorway system at 45mph. We took it in turn to drive, whilst the other person slept in the back. As we crossed the great northern plains, I was awoken by Charlie who says that the windscreen wiper had fallen off a km or so back. This was not going so well. We stopped to have a look but it seemed too difficult to swap the passenger side wiper onto the drivers side, so we carried on. Of course it decided to rain every now and then, and some of the torrential downpours made it pretty hard to see at times. South of Grenoble the motorway ground to a halt and we sat in a Traffic queue for about 2 hours, watching the French families get out and have picnics on the motorway. Eventually the traffic cleared and we were again making good progress. Typically as darkness started to fall it began to rain, and I ended up driving through the start of the Chamonix valley in a torrential downpour, in the dark, with no windscreen wiper, crap lights and being hit by a wall of water with every passing truck. As we passed Servoz the weather dried up and the mountains were bathed in moonlight as we entered Chamonix 24hrs after leaving Bath. Not too bad for a 30 year old bus.

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We found Fiona and Angus' flat relatively easily, and were soon settled in. Fiona had let us use the flat whilst they were off doing the PWC and having a family holiday. The flat is on the top floor of an apartment block near the Savoy landing field. There is a balcony which faces the Aiguille du Midi and Mt Blanc itself, this view is pretty amazing and Charlie came back with rather a lot of photos of it. It was great having a base in town where we could leave our paragliders etc. knowing they would be safe, unlike when you are camping, it was also good to have a TV for the weather forecasts, although the Meteo is easily obtained at the 'Maison du Montagnes' in the centre of town.

The forecast for the first week was not very good with fronts coming through and lots of cloud and rain, but it was forecast to clear up from Thursday. We spent the first week doing some of the many walks in the Chamonix valley including the Grand Balcon Sud. Although the weather wasn't brilliant, with some rain, we often underestimated the walks were great, although more than one occasion how far some of them were. On knackered, then realised we wondered why we were so equivalent of Ben Nevis that we had climbed the occasions the hardwork from sea level. On numerous views, as the clouds split apart to reveal a hitherto unseen mountain face towering above us. Only once did the weather stop us doing a walk we had planned, and that was when we had Brevent and down to the Servoz, however the first sound of drops of rain sent us scurrying back down to the safety of the valley.

All week we were religiously reading the copy posted in change to more settled the end of the week the signs looked like we would get some Dennis Trott at his Alpine Flying even though I had been to I always try to get some local recommend Dennis he certainly always seems willing to help. XC course with accommodation Houches. Dennis said that he to Plaine Joux which just Chamonix valley. The next day and w headed off to Plaine it's way up the zig zags to that day both of about an hour getting a grand or so above take onto the main cliffs but having a bit rough at times. We decided celebrating our first flying day Mex in town at a restaurant pilot. We eventually found our way back to the flat feeling a little tired and a little tipsy.

We decided to fly at Plan Praz the next day as we thought it would work earlier than Plaine Joux, and it's an even more spectacular site to fly. We walked to the cable car station and headed up to the middle station, where the take off is situated. I think Charlie found having to contend with all the professional Bi-place pilots a bit stressful, but her launch was perfect and she headed off round to 'Le Pump', I followed and got the usual rough and strong climb out over the restaurant 2000. It didn't take me that high and try as I could there was no real height gains to be had 1000' at maybe at best, and the sink was pretty wild. I headed over to some gullie on the side of Le Brevent hoping to be able to climb up the face. Here I had my biggest tuck that I have had on the Soul and the biggest I have had for a couple of years. 70-80% of the glider disappeared but it re-inflated incredibly quickly, almost taking me by surprise as I had started to counter brake automatically. The air was rough and I just couldn't stay with the punchy bullets of lift, and so gradually sank down the face instead of climbing it as I hoped. Eventually I admitted defeat and headed off to land in the Savoy landing site, which



*FreeX at Plaine Joux*

watching 'Le Meteo' and town, hoping for a weather. At last towards started to improve, and it flying in. We talked to Centre for some advice, Cham a few times before knowledge. I knows the area well, and Dennis offers Alpine and at his chalet in Les was taking his students outside the main dawned bright and sunny Joux, the splitty making takeoff. I had two flights or so, nothing epic only off and not getting back good time even if was a to spend that evening by going out for a Tex owned by a paraglider

## NOVA

proved entertaining with all the thermals popping of the hotel roofs. Charlie had landed at the Bois du Bouchet LZ which is nicer. We met up and decided to head up to Plaine Joux for an afternoon's fly.

At Plaine Joux we met Dennis and the others. We all had excellent flights with Charlotte, an English couple on a dual, one of Dennis' students and myself thermalling up the cliffs behind together. These cliffs are easy to underestimate in size, it's only when you get close to them you realise how huge they are. I spent 3 hours in the air finally landing after 7 in the evening, and excellent days flying, even if the low cloudbase had curtailed any real XC flying.

The next day didn't work so well. Dennis had gone to Annecy to avoid the storms forecast for the evening. We went back to Plaine Joux which didn't work till late. I only got about half an hour in a very extended top to bottom, however Charlie had a great flight a bit later getting to 3500' ato. That evening we were treated to a display of nature's power as lightning struck the peaks above the valley. We flew Plan Praz the next day and I flew up the valley to Flegere and back, but the valley wind was pretty strong so I only just made it back to the landing and Charlie descended pretty much vertically having no real forward speed. There were pretty big clouds around which curtailed any further flying so we relaxed and wandered round town buying presents and

sending the final post cards. The next day dawned and although a dull and overcast, few people were flying basically top to bottoms we decided to go for a walk up to the Bosson Glacier instead. Thankfully the Cham dawned and the final full day in sunny and the forecast was for a good day, we hoped to fly from one Plan Praz but no one seemed to be up so we headed to Plaine Joux again. I had my best flight of the holiday another 3 hr getting to ato, but the clouds base at 4500' were pretty range were pretty big and below the tops, blocking any XCs in that direction. I contented myself with wandering round Fiona's 25km triangle, that I had been looking at



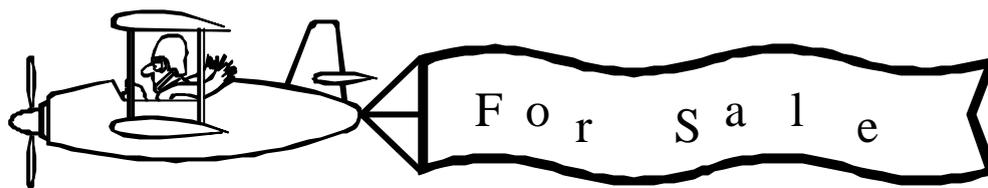
*The View Up The Mere de Glace*

everyday sat on the loo. At one point I thought that the clouds were a bit big and the lift was getting strong, so I burnt off about 2000' but then decided it wasn't too bad so thermalled back up. We chatted to the others at the bar by the landing site and they told us of their attempt to fly the Grands Montets that morning, this enthused Charlie and we decided to do it the next morning before hitting the road home. We got up early the next morning to get the first cable car from Argentiere at 8:30. The snow was still crisp as we walked out onto the glacier and laid out are canopies, the others had had to abort their attempt when the snow melted and it became impossible to run. We got off easily, as there was even a slight breeze blowing up the front. The flying was spectacular with a great view up the Mere de Glace and over the Aiguille Rouge. I took the video and videoed the flight which turned out remarkably well. We both landed together in the Bois de Bouchet LZ and I went to retrieve the van from Argentiere whilst Charlie finished the packing. On my return we discovered the van had decided it wasn't going back to England and that it would rather stay in the sunshine of Cham, it was gushing oil. A hasty call to the AA and a garage was found who said it could not be fixed till Tuesday as it was a bank holiday. The AA said they could recover it to England and that we could have a hire car, unfortunately there weren't any available, we were stranded! So we headed into town for some fast food french style followed by quite a bit of beer in 'The Pub', an english bar in town. The next day we managed to find a hire car, and drove without stopping through France, and managed to make our ferry. The van made it's own way back and was fixed and back on the road in two weeks, having cost me absolutely nothing. It all worked out in the end. We had had a great holiday, even if the weather wasn't perfect, and can only recommend Cham as a place to go. Finally a big thankyou to Fiona and Angus for letting us use their flat.

Marcus King

Photos Charlie Hedges

## NOVA



## Gliders & Bits For Sale

**Edel Saber Medium** perfect condition 3 Hrs, Tangerine Orange £1500

**Edel Pro Harness** New £280 normally £360

**Brauniger Basis Vario** £160

**Flight Design A4 Tandem** 100-200kg, very good condition, ideal cheap tandem £750ono

**Trekking Odyssey XL** good condition suit XC pilot £1400ono

**Tandem Secura Max Reserve** old never used in anger £240

Telephone Eddie on 01297 489351 (1)

**Airwave Kiss**, winner of last years Avon XC league. Excellent sink rate, high milage glider £270. Tel Kevin Winter 01761 452455. (1)

**Trekking Odyssey**, small, yellow/blue. Less than 1 year old, an excellent, safe glider for aspiring light weight pilots - BPC/Airwave Challenge etc. Due for replacement micro lines (could be changed for thicker ones now) thus only £1000.

**Airwave XMX** Only 2 months old. Excellent condition. Ring for details.

Mobile to Angus: 0468 743613 or tel/fax me on 00 33 450 53 82 79 or Email 100344.1000@compuserve.com  
Fiona Macaskill (1)

**Space 22** (small) with Trekking 'start' harness. Excellent package for club pilot, will also sell separately £1000 ono for glider and harness or make an offer. Tel Fax Sarah 01598 752216 (1)

**Calypso**, superb condition, very low airtime, 1 owner, always stored inside £895 Tel Jon 015453 547204 (2)

**Airwave K4** - Good Condition. Low airtime for age (approx 3 years). Genuine reason for sale of much loved glider £1000 ono Tel Mike 01453 886087 (3)

*Adverts will automatically come out after they have been in three issues of NOVA. If you sell your stuff before then, let the editor know so your advert can come out and you will not be hassled by thousands of eager buyers!*

## Chairman's Bit

Pete is in the states, so he is unable to share any of his latest hang gliding exploits with you.

## NOVA

**And now for something entirely different...**

**Presenting...**

In a recent edition of the "Wacky Tee Shirt Club" Gazette, it was rumoured that there had been a rare sighting of the ultimate limited edition tee.

On the front of this priceless garment is printed a script detailing the life and times of a contemporary aviator and a legend of our time. Featured is the brilliant, young and handsome pilot Tim ("if it's got wings, fly it!") Brunskill. There is a flattering photograph of the aerial master and a transcript from an interview relating some of his many adventures.

The sighting of this apparel was thought to have happened in a seedy Bristol pub on the evening of the first Tuesday in September. This pub, aptly named the Griffin Inn is known to be the venue for occasional gatherings of a strange cult who aspire to live their lives as birds. Little is known of these folk who speak only of thermals. They worship from remote hill tops where they dream of long migrations aloft in their craft.

Only one of these tee shirts has ever been made and other than cheap, fake copies none will ever be available to the masses.

In this NOVA exclusive we reveal the text of this outstanding tee. Since it is apparently difficult to read while the wearer is drinking, we have reprinted it for your enduring pleasure.

..... For Tim and Lisa Pentreath THANKYOU both. It's brilliant and it was, is and probably will be the funniest birthday present I have ever had.

**T.B.**

**And finally would anybody from the Mendip Tow group like to let us know about why you let Pete Corcoran ride the 50cc Simson that lays out the winch lines and watch him trash it into a all on full throttle"! (Apparently Martin can't ride for toffee either.)**

**NOVA needs your articles now. I have had many comments on how good it is to read about other members exploits so get sending your articles to:-**

**Marcus King  
159 The High Street  
Batheaston  
Bath  
BA1 7DW**

**or**

**Email to [marcus@skytribe.force9.co.uk](mailto:marcus@skytribe.force9.co.uk)**