

Flying Scot – September 2002



Aonach Mor 16th September – Picture Mike Jardine, SMPC

Chairmans Page - Dave Thomson

After almost 2 years as SHPF Chairman I was beginning to doubt whether we were making any positive impression on Free-Flying in Scotland. It's very easy to focus on the areas where we don't appear to be succeeding;- the large number of pilots who don't participate in the events we run; the pilots who don't come out flying on good days; those who are not interested in benefiting from the experience of our Club Coaches; etc,etc. The very nature of our sport, the people it attracts, and the extremely limited weather window we need, all lead to inherent difficulties in achieving the aims we have set.

But, last weekend, at the Aberdeen round of the Scottish Nationals Series, I realised I have been looking at it from the wrong angle, because it is clear that we are achieving success. - A well run competition with tasks which challenged but did not intimidate the wide range of pilots present, low airtime pilots benefitting from experience of more experienced pilots, and pilots from Clubs all over the country enjoying a great social weekend.

SHPF plays a role in this - In organising training for Club Coaches, First Aiders, Parachute Packers, in promoting the competitions, and most importantly in providing a forum for the Clubs to discuss and resolve issues. However, SHPF cannot be effective unless the Clubs are providing what pilots need ; - somewhere to fly; effective coaching to encourage and assist pilots to expand their experience; effective communications to find out what's going on; and of course a group of friends to go flying with.

In the last few seasons, all our Clubs have had a hard time, with a combination of weather, Foot and Mouth, and (possibly) our accident record causing many pilots to lose enthusiasm or give up completely. We are beginning to climb out of that now but we need more input from everyone. If we all put a little more into the sport, we would all get a lot more out of it ! There are so many different ways you could make a significant contribution to your Club and to the sport - help negotiate a new site , get trained as a Coach, organise an Parachute Packing event, get trained in First Aid, write an article for the Flying Scot, or dozens of other ways - even just participate in one of the events which has been organised !

David Thomson, Chairman SHPF

SHPF AGM 2003 -- 22 Feb 2003 - PortMoak

Early warning of our AGM day. Following the success of the last 2 years events, we will following a similar format with a wide range of activites planned to keep everyone busy and entertained in whatever weather we get. More Details will be in the Next Flying Scot.

Club Coach Notes Sep 2002

The last edition of Club Coach Notes was all about take off timing and positioning. As a result of a sample poll of pilots, and more importantly by observing a number of pilots doing precisely what I was suggesting was not a good idea, and vice versa, I could conclude that no-one reads the articles! However, this month is going to deal with an unpopular subject which few pilots want to address: Accidents - **just how much is it worth doing to avoid having a flying accident?**

If there are no readers past this point then that's fine, because this article is of great personal interest to me, since I am currently laid up with severely duffed in knee ligaments, having managed to have one of the most common and avoidable accidents ! Having 360d (or is that 280'd) into the hill, I'm sitting here (with 2 kg of frozen peas wrapped round my knee!) thinking - "How did that happen?", and "What could I have done to avoid it ? " In answering these, I hope that you may benefit from some of the lessons learned.

As with any accident, when you analyse it with hindsight, there are always a series of factors which add together to produce the final outcome - remove any one of these and you avoid the prang! My crash happened on the Sunday task of the Aberdeen round of the Scottish Nationals - here's a quick list of the factors which led to it:

1) Over determined. It was a beautiful day, but very stable, and I was aware of the need to use every piece of lift to maximum effect. I was distinctly less than comfortable that I had wasted lots of height searching for a climb in weak broken thermals across the first valley. When I finally reached some

consistent but still weak lift, running up a spur, I was determined to climb up to where everyone else was.

2) Strength and type of climb - I misjudged the ratio of thermic to dynamic lift I was in, and, thinking it was mostly a thermal tracking up the spur, I put in a 360. The reason for the misjudgement was related to recent experience - I had just recently returned from 2 weeks flying in St Andre and Piedrahita so I was very "tuned into" conditions of well formed thermals and very little met wind. In these conditions when you turn back towards the hill, you continue to climb (IF you are correctly centred) and the hill does not get any closer. Not so when you 360 towards the hill in dynamic (ridge) lift - the glider pitches forward a little and accelerates towards the hill on the downwind part of the turn.

3) Visibility - My standard "look over the shoulder" prior to initiating the turn was quite ineffective because the sun was shining from behind the ridge straight into my sunglasses making the detail of the shady terrain below the horizon difficult to assess. As a result my judgement of safety margin for the turn was rubbish.

4) After this point it was largely luck - If I had been 1 foot higher, I would have cleared the hill. If I had been slightly lower, or the terrain a bit less friendly, then the outcome would have been more serious. As I came in, with a closing speed of about 30 mph, the phrase I learned during Club Pilot training flashed through my mind - "If you are about to crash, get your legs down, pull lots of brake and try to make it look like a landing !" The last bit wasn't an option, because as I put my legs out to set up for a PLF to meet the fast approaching ground, I didn't lock my knees together tightly enough, and on first impact, one leg got pulled sideways, in the direction it's not designed to bend!

That's how it happened, so lets look at what I could have done to avoid it happening. In the extreme, I could have given up flying last week! This maybe sounds flippant but it is most certainly not. Regularly, and especially when touched by accidents involving my close friends, I have asked myself the question - "Is this sport worth the risk ?" or "Am I prepared to accept the consequences if I get it wrong ?" Every time I come to a very definite "Yes", although that very definitely does NOT mean that I am prepared to accept the risk without having done everything possible to minimise it.

If you are still reading this you have probably also asked yourself these big questions. The opposite approach is to say "Accidents happen to someone else, I don't like to think about them!". Pilots with this approach will not have continued reading this far because they won't consider it worth the effort of taking steps to avoid an accident because they are not going to have one. Hmm - sounds like a seriously dangerous strategy !

I could have decided not to take off - but that would have been ridiculous as conditions were fine. Or I could have thought a bit more carefully prior to starting my 360 - Now we are getting to the crux of the prang. I have advised dozens of pilots on this issue - "S turn up the hill until you are clear of the top, or you are far enough forward to do a safe 360, even assuming its all sink behind you". So why did I make such a stupid and obvious mistake ? I rushed a crucial decision ! I didn't look over my sunglasses to assess the terrain correctly; I didn't push out far enough to properly assess the wind speed on the spur and the depth of the lift; and most importantly I was overconfident that I would get it round. I've had a few sharp intake of breaths in the past as I turned towards the hill and I've always got away with it, so I guess I believed this one would be similar.

Has anyone else had that same feeling of relief when you round out the turn and just clear the hill ? Or any one of dozens of similar situations where you just get away with it ? Thats the whole point of this article - just how much is it worth doing to avoid having a flying accident ? The total cost of this quite trivial accident has been significant; to me (having come last in the task, and missed a few weeks of flying, not to mention quite a lot of Ouch!); to Brendan (who landed to help); to the pilots who carried me down the hill (Thanks for that !); to the NHS; to my employer and everyone who had to cover my work while I'm off; etc, etc - and it could so easily have been much, much more.

This accident is typical of the most common kind of accident... where the only means of prevention is good pilot judgement. (We have regularly dealt with the other type of accident involving glider control skills.) Given that sooner or later we will all get a judgement wrong, it is clearly obvious that the only way of preventing this type of accident is to build in larger margins - during every part of every flight. If anyone has ever that feeling of relief at having "got away" with something, it should be "ringing the alarm bells" - it should NOT be cause for celebration. It should be a clear warning that your safety margin is too small! The cost of increasing your safety margin may be that sometimes you might have to land because you didn't hook that climb over the power line, or maybe you even miss a flight because you didn't take off into conditions you are not quite happy about. Whatever you do to

increase your safety margin it's obvious that sometimes you'll only avoid a "close call" that you could have shrugged off because you got away with it. The snag is that no-one can know, at the time you make that crucial decision, whether it's going to result in a "close call", or a long lay off, or worse!

But, one thing is absolutely clear, - with the serious accidents we have seen this season, (in fact the last few seasons), it must be obvious to everyone that the trivial cost of increasing our safety margin is definitely worth it, because it could help to avoid the immense cost we have seen to some of our friends.



Dave T (far left) briefing low airtime pilots or their first xc landouts at the recent Aberdeen Open, some are paying more attention than others!!

Aberdeen: the first, last & definitive round of the Scottish Paragliding Nationals 2002 by Taco Viets AHPC

Imagine the Formula 1 racing world championship without any cars doing laps on any of the circuits or the Soccer world championships without any balls being kicked around. That was nearly the fate of the Scottish paragliding Nationals this year. Four rounds and no task flown so far: Arran rained off and Borders overdeveloped, Ochil Hills and Tinto?...too much wind! The saving grace came from the Aberdeen round. Two glorious days in the weekend of 14/15 September saw 25 happy pilots flying around the Grampian Mountains. At last the hard work of organizers coincided with good weather!

Saturday brought light north easterlies. The task consisted of an open distance from the Cairnwell in any direction along the Devils Elbow road. Most of the pilots spent the afternoon merrily soaring in front of the Cairnwell hoping for the one thermal that would kick them higher than everybody else and allow them to sneak away from the pack.



In the end, by late afternoon, one by one they capitulated to a down wind glide from Cairnwell altitude towards the south. Matthew Church got the best distance with 5.3 km, putting him in the lead of the Scottish Nationals. The last task of the day was drinking beers in the sun outside the Spittal of Glenshee, while running a sweepstake on the duration of Brian Steele's flight from a nearby hill. He had spend around an hour walking in order to keep a sore ankle moving. The reward... 3 minutes and 35

seconds with hecklers on the radio saying "Big ears NOWW.. I want to win the sweep!"

On Sunday conditions were even lighter with initially northwesterly winds. A relatively unknown site was chosen: the Morrone or Morven, just south of Braemar. Many thanks to Pete Fottrell for ferrying us all up the long and winding road to the top and to Invercauld estate for their cooperation.

There, the long wait started but who cares with such a superb view of the Cairngorms and Lochnagar. (*Pic Looking NW towards Mar Lodge and the Cairngorms*). The task was an open distance along the Devils Elbow road, with Cairnwell being the first turnpoint.

Slowly the wind direction changed to an easterly, but this was initially barely noticeable due to thermals coming up on both sides of the hill. Suddenly everybody realized the NW face was not working and a desperate gaggle of pilots scrambled to the other side of the hill and took off towards the Cairnwell. Some good lift was to be found on the western side of Glen Clunie.



One of the early leaders Dave Thomson landed hard on a shady ridge while in weak thermals and hurt his knee. Thanks to Brendan Reid who landed nearby sacrificing a good placing to help Dave to limp slowly off the mountain.

Good gaggle flying ensued, with Tony Spirling getting the furthest with 7.6 km, enough to win the day and to make him the winner of the Scottish paragliding Nationals for 2002. He and nearby Brian Steele had to wade through a river to get to the retrieve minibus but after the heat of the day, their boots needed cooling! Julian Robinson walked up a nearby hill after the task and was hoovered up to 1600 metres in convergence, he was late to the pub, but had a huge grin!

Matthew Church saved the honor of the locals by coming third. This and the fact that he organised the whole event earn him a big thank you. Also thanks to Lu for the recovery driving and to the Logan Nisbet for organising the series.

As for myself, I have had to revise my resolution never to participate in paragliding competitions. This weekend's event was full of fun and relaxed flying. I'll definitely be there for next year's Scottish Nationals.

| Pilot | Club | Rating | 14th Sept Task 1 | 15th Sept Task 2 | Total | Points | Position | |
|---------|----------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------|----------|----|
| Tony | Spirling | Extreme | P | 4.0 | 7.6 | 11.6 | 580 | 1 |
| Brian | Steele | SMPC | P | 3.7 | 7.3 | 11.0 | 550 | 2 |
| Matthew | Church | AHPC | P | 5.3 | 5.0 | 10.3 | 515 | 3 |
| Simon | Lucas | AHPC | P | 5.1 | 4.9 | 10.0 | 500 | 4 |
| David | Fletcher | Extreme | P | 4.3 | 5.6 | 9.9 | 495 | 5 |
| John | Newton | AHPC | P | 5.1 | 4.7 | 9.8 | 490 | 6 |
| Moir | Reoch | LLSC | P | 3.9 | 5.8 | 9.7 | 485 | 7 |
| Julian | Robinson | AHPC | P | 3.7 | 6.0 | 9.7 | 485 | 7 |
| Beth | Galloway | LLSC | AP | 4.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 | 400 | 8 |
| Mark | Robson | LLSC | CP | 3.5 | 4.5 | 8.0 | 400 | 8 |
| George | McGhee | LLSC | P | 1.5 | 6.0 | 7.5 | 375 | 9 |
| Adam | Bednall | LLSC | P | 2.5 | 4.8 | 7.3 | 365 | 10 |
| Brendan | Reid | LLSC | P | 4.4 | 2.0 | 6.4 | 320 | 11 |
| Logan | Nisbet | Extreme | P | 4.0 | 2.0 | 6.0 | 300 | 12 |
| Dave | Thomson | LLSC | P | 3.9 | 2.0 | 5.9 | 295 | 13 |
| Taco | Viets | AHPC | P | 1.0 | 4.8 | 5.8 | 290 | 14 |
| Brian | Sandison | AHPC | CP | 0.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 250 | 15 |
| Kenny | Cooper | LLSC | P | 4.8 | NTS | 4.8 | 240 | 16 |
| Phil | Reoch | LLSC | AP | DNF | 4.8 | 4.8 | 240 | 16 |
| Bob | Matthews | LLSC | P | 4.0 | NTS | 4.0 | 200 | 17 |
| Douglas | Bain | LLSC | P | 2.0 | NTS | 2.0 | 100 | 18 |
| Alan | Douglas | Extreme | P | DNF | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100 | 18 |
| Bruce | Barrack | LLSC | P | 1.0 | NTS | 1.0 | 50 | 19 |
| Pete | Fottrell | AHPC | P | NTS | Drove | 0.0 | 0 | 20 |
| Ian | Ross | LLSC | CP | NTS | DNF | 0.0 | 0 | 20 |
| | DNF | Did not fly | | NTS | No Task Sheet | | | |

Tony Spirling (not Spiralling) on his triumphant Nationals debut

The story begins as follows - In 1980 I took up hang gliding eventually competing in the Nationals and representing Britain in international comps. In 1986 I took up gliding seduced by the promise of greater height, speed and distance. I competed in numerous regional competitions and qualified for the Nationals. Competitive hang gliding had been fantastic, the intensity, the camaraderie and the travel were great. Competitive gliding was safer, fairer and possible in a broader range of conditions but it never quite matched the intensity of hang gliding, a quality versus quantity issue perhaps. In 1995 I came to Scotland and took a job as a full-time gliding instructor. I became very good at flying gliders but in the process gliding lost its power to thrill me.

I wanted to find my way back to the intensity and camaraderie provided by hang gliding but they say you can't return to past and I also needed a new challenge. The solution was obvious, Paragliding! One problem, after spending so much time flying rigid and semi-rigid when I fly paragliders I tend to be very insecure and nervous. Despite this limitation Saturday 14th found me preparing to fly from the NE face of the Cairnwell at 4pm having come up to free fly and realised that the Aberdeen Club round of the Scottish Paragliding Nationals was taking place at the Cairnwell. I was the last pilot to arrive and the last to take off but had driven under paragliders gliding down the glen towards the Spittal of Glenshee. I simply took off and worked the ridge lift as high as it would take me, no thermals by this time, and then set off on a down wind glide relying on the performance of my new glider to deliver the goods which it duly did. Task one completed with a respectable score. Next day I was more organised and made it to the briefing in Braemar. We were to fly from Morven the gliders would be taken up by a 4*4 and we would walk up. The long walk up in perfect weather was a good opportunity to glean valuable advice from the more experienced pilots on topics ranging from choosing a glider to SIV courses. The advice was given generously.

The task was XC to goal at the Cairnwell, land by 5pm.

We all set up on the west face, but there was little wind and even less thermal activity, stable anticyclonic conditions. At about 3-30 a sea breeze blew in from the Northeast and we all made our way to the east face of the hill. By the time I got set up several people had taken off and some were working thermals out front triggered by the arrival of the sea breeze. I found the crosswind take off from a very gentle slope tricky but once established in the air I quickly focused on the task in hand. 18 years before I had blown a task in this glen by flying through weak wave in search of ridge lift this time I was determined to take my time expect any and all forms of lift and try not to make any mistakes. I tend to forget my successes quickly and dwell on my failures for years so this was a chance to redeem myself. My tactics were simple climb as high as possible in each area of lift, allow at least two other pilots to glide out ahead of me to highlight areas of lift or sink and try to glide as efficiently as possible.

The new glider, an Airwave Sport, had excellent glide and manoeuvrability served me well in this task always being able to match other gliders in both climb and glide. I revelled in the intense concentration, observing other pilots and monitoring the terrain whilst optimising the climb or glide of the glider. Slowly other gliders dropped away leaving just two of us, Brian Steele and myself, gliding on. Brian scouted ahead and hooked a thermal low down just beyond Glen Clunie Lodge and I slid in underneath him very low but determined not to let him get away.

The area about me was landable so I decided that if there was lift I would work it come what may! I was lucky I managed to climb slowly in patchy lift working my way up the ridge in improving lift. Next I encountered rough but strong patches of lift that felt more like wave than thermal. As I watched Brian glide steeply down to land towards the south I realised that the lift was convergence and that Brian had been gliding towards goal but into a strengthening headwind. Again my task was clear climb as high as possible in the convergence to enable me to glide beyond Brian into the headwind. Upon leaving the convergence my glide deteriorated dramatically in the headwind and I began to doubt that I would be able to glide beyond Brian but again the performance of the new Glider paid dividends and I was able to glide an extra hundred metres to win the task.

Was the result significant? For the Scottish Paragliding rankings, obviously not, one short task proves nothing. For me as an individual I had rediscovered the intensity and camaraderie of competitive flying with an immediacy that I had not experienced in other forms of aviation. Also in the heat of competition I lost my nervousness and insecurity. Many thanks to all the people that made that experience possible particularly Logan Nisbet and Mathew Church the organisers. The competition combined a friendly easygoing atmosphere with efficient organisation and good attention to safety, well done!

FIRST AID COURSE - NOVEMBER 22nd to 24th 2002

The SHPF propose to hold another of these very successful courses with the well-trying and tested format. For those who may not be familiar with this, it involves a residential weekend, from Friday night to Sunday afternoon inclusive.

The venue will be Gustav's bunkhouse at the Spital of Glenshee and the trainer will be Colin Young.

There will be places for ten with a maximum of twelve Scottish club pilots and can include those who may have done a previous course more than three years ago.

The course will have a substantial SHPF subsidy and will therefore cost you just £25.

For this princely sum you will receive a recognised first aid course, two nights B&B plus two soup & sandwich lunches and one evening meal.

If any club committee members are reading this then you may wish to consider using club funds to subsidise your candidates and help get more trained people on your hills.

Please register your interest to me ASAP preferably by e-mail, indicating which club you belong to.

Chris Gill

Tele: 01309 672752 or e-mail cjgill@nascr.net

Or write: Auchentulloch, Rafford, Forres IV36 2RU

Tinto and Broughton Fees - Phil Reoch, LLSC Chairman

LLSC is pleased, as always, to welcome visitors to club sites, however, I'd like to remind all non-club members using Tinto that £2 site fees are payable before flying at this site.

(LLSC members fees for Tinto are already incorporated in the annual club fee)

Visitors (ie. non members) fees should be deposited in the box, by the gate when you sign in – or passed to a committee member, if present.

The only other LLSC site where fees apply is at Broughton, where £2 should be paid direct to the farmer before flying. *(including LLSC members)*

I'd appreciate anyone recommending new pilots to Tinto or Broughton to also advise them of these site rules. These club rules are not new and regular users should already be aware of them.

My thanks to all those pilots who already comply with the above.

Scotland's first WindTalker

Did you know that Scotland now has it's own windTalker? The Tinto windTalker (TT for short) has been giving reliable wind speed and other weather information at Tinto since the start of August this year.

What this means is that for a very small fee* you can save your self a lot of petrol money and wasted time if you fly in the vicinity of the Tinto hills. Your fee of £ 10.00 will entitle you to 20 calls if you are not a member of the LLSC or 25 calls if you are. Calling credit does not expire so even if you fly Tinto infrequently it should still be worth while.

How it works is simple, you dial a normal one2one (0795 8075442) number and assuming you have your personal ID and Password you will be told, in a nice friendly South African accent,(**) the current wind speed and direction, with gust information, a wind history, wind scatter, temperature, dew point, humidity and coldest temperature last night. For all the info and a sample of the message etc visit www.windtalker.co.uk or email info@windtalker.co.uk

I would like to thank the LLSC committee and specifically Bob for their assistance with the TT project.

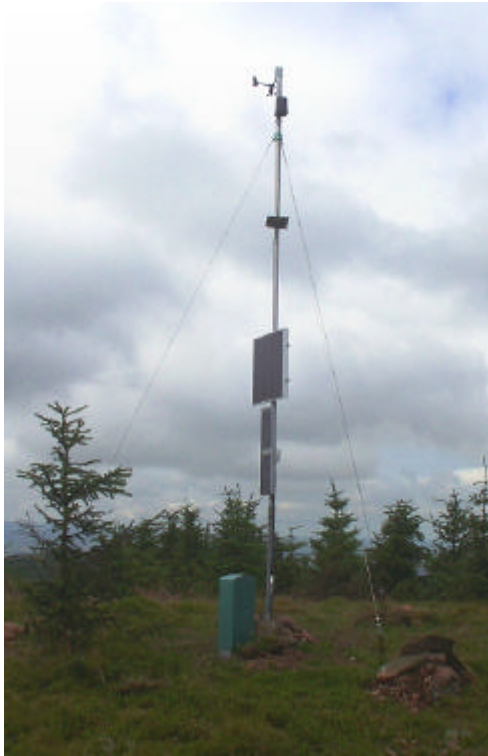
Hope to see you on the hill.
Stephen (WindTalker)

* To subscribe to the wind talker you only need to send me £ 10.00 That is a £ 10.00 cheque made out to Stephen Pegler and addressed to...
Stephen Pegler c/o WindTalker
47 Kaims Gardens
Livingston Village
Livingston
EH54 7DY

(Please include your email address so I can easily send you your personal ID etc, or if you don't have an email address a contact phone number)

** any voice over models want to apply for the job of recording a more pleasing (female Scottish accent?) message please apply to the above email address. ☺

Tinto windTalker Specials until 8 November 2002



From now until 8 November 2002 anybody who would genuinely like to try out the TT but is not sure if it is worth the £10 can email me at info@windtalker.co.uk and I'll issue them with their own ID and Password with just 4 credits, free of charge.

If you know you would like to use the service send me £10 and I'll give new users from LLSC 30 credits and non LLSC members 25 credits. (Instead of the usual 25 and 20) But only until 8 November 2002.

Users who have already signed up can update their credits by sending another £10 and I'll issue 30 or 25 additional credits to their remaining balance.

Best to get your TT credits sorted out now because I'll be away for about the first half of October and won't be able to update/add and new users during that time.

Please go to www.windtalker.co.uk for all the latest news.

My Favourite Local Site – Brian Steele

Since the age of 10 I have been going to Hillend near Edinburgh and slaloming through ski poles on the most painful surface know to skiers, Dendix. I have usually visited on dark, rainy winter nights when the long, floodlit ski slope could be seen from Fife and East Lothian. The views of the twinkling lights of Edinburgh and Fife were beautiful then but I was too busy avoiding crashes and racing to the finish line to really appreciate the view.

In 1998 I began to learn to fly with Tom Duffin and Mark Graham. We visited the hill in better weather and, of course, daylight! Again I was too busy to take in the view, but they explained how the site worked and that on a good sea breeze day it was an excellent site to get some relaxing soaring done. Years later, I have built up some experience of flying near huge Scottish mountains and sampled the delights of flying abroad. I fly with people whose main goal is to fly cross- country and get high. These people return from their epic trips but still go flying for fun at hillend where we cant go XC and are in controlled airspace. Why do I love it?

Obviously the height and the terrain is a lot more 'Epic' and 'awesome' in places like Torrion and Glencoe, but after a weekend of walking up large hills in search of the lesser spotted Scottish thermal, it is great to drive up to hillend shi centre car park in your suit and tie, do a quick 'Mr Ben' in the changing rooms and then go up most of the hill by chairlift. When the chairlift is not on the ski centre staff can even let us use the poma, or drag tow. This is quite rapid and without skis on your feet you have to skip and run up the dendix track before walking the last steep section to one of the take-offs. The staff at the ski centre get a good laugh watching us bounce up the hill! It usually takes about 30 minutes from my cramped and windowless desk to standing on take off.

The hill takes North, North East and South Easterly and on light sunny days it often gets a good smooth seabreeze. Indeed it is possible to fly on the Northerly face while pilots at more inland sites such as Tinto or Broughton are flying in a Southerly/ South Westerly.

Once you have taken off you will have a fair sized ridge to play with and on some evenings we have had 10 or more gliders flying for hours. If the airport give you clearance to fly above hill height, you can circle round and look at the Ochils, the Forth Bridges, most of Edinburgh, East Lothian and then south to Penicuik and the long and beautiful Pentland hills stretching out into the distance. Small birds of prey fly around with you and on some occasions you can see them diving below you to catch their next meal. If you are restricted to low level flying then the smoothness of the terrain allows you to get nice and close in and practice touch and gos, top-landings, rabbit chasing and so on!

Caution

Take off – generally easy but on strong wind days it is best to take off slightly lower than the top of the hill to avoid the compression. There is a small fence on top of the hill that has caught a couple of pilots! There's tough heather on the Northerly take off and you should check that your glider is completely free of this before committing to a launch.

Landing areas are tight and the proximity of so many people, cables and thick gorse mean that you should really need to talk to a pilot who has flown there already before you take off.

Airspace is a major but uncomplicated factor Hillend. It is NOT an XC site. You should also speak to pilots to be aware of the procedures for liasing with Edinburgh airport, who, over the telephone, give us case by case permission to fly at the site. They can see us from their control tower and warn aircraft of our presence, so don't fly without their permission and stick to the height regulations.

Fees

Pilots who fly at hillend make a donation of £5. This is payable via Fred Robinson of SMPC. Paragliding tickets are available for the chairlift, they come with 5 credits and cost around £5. (Poma is free as we generate entertainment for bored chairlift staff).

Pub

Apart from the smooth flying, the chairlift and the great city views, there is also a pub, the Steading, at the bottom of the ski centre road. Many Edinburgh based pilots meet there after flying and every Wednesday night, with pilots ranging from PWC entrants to new CP's with 15 hours under their belt. See you there.

Location

Just south of Edinburgh - A702 Biggar Road near the Lothianburn Junction of the A720 Edinburgh City bypass follow the signs for Midlothian Ski Centre. Paragliders should park in the lower section of the ski centre car park

Flying with Buzzards (Apologies to Judy Leden). Cliff Smith .

As the curtains opened I could scarcely believe my eyes, the flags at Kwik Fit were fluttering gently and from a southwest direction, blue skies with light fluffy clouds everywhere and best of all a full day pass from family duties. This was to be the day that my training began. Or so I thought.

I telephoned the number, as I had on so many occasions over the past few weeks. A familiar voice answered.

'Sorry mate winds too strong' 'Your having a laugh' I ventured 'Nah straight up too strong it's canned for the day'

Click. F**k it. (I don't normally swear but now I made an exception). Another day gone and still not started my training.

Last year with F&M was bad but this, this was worse. I'd sat at home and watched gliders soaring the slopes of Hillend and how I wanted to be up there with them. On the 'phone again.

'Listen I've read about training abroad can you recommend anywhere?''Sure try this number' Turned out it was for Northern Paragliders who run courses at a place called the Grand Dune de Pyla on the Atlantic coast near Bordeaux in the south west of France. Everything sounded perfect, sun, sea, sand, and beer oh and even some paragliding.

So I booked there and then, flashed the plastic, sat back and then wondered how to tell Cath what I'd done.

As it turned out she decided that it sounded a cool place to head for with the kids so I was instructed to get straight back on the blower and book flights and accommodation for us all.

We travelled out a few days ahead of the course, cheap flights to Bordeaux, hired a car and relaxed into the French way of things.

The Dune is an amazing spectacle in its own right, over 100 metres high and stretching many kilometres along the coast. It was a mother of a walk to get to the top but it was worth it for the stunning views across the sea to the setting sun. And then a glider swooped into view, soared along the Dune playing on the waves of invisible air drawn in on a fresh sea breeze. I sat and watched transfixed and dreamed.

The course started as expected, introductions, course outline, some theory and much watching of skies.

'Look lets get down to the Dune and try some flying. Conditions seem good right now so lets make the most of it incase it changes'

Next thing I know we are on the beach, strapped into a harness and are getting into a ground handling session. This is more like it. Then he says 'Time for some flying' Its hands up time, run like the clappers and I'm up and away, airborne.

The flight lasted maybe 30 seconds but I couldn't care really. I'd flown on my own and that was it. Like you I was hooked. Up the Dune like Beau Geste ready for flight two. By the end of the day I was knackered, I guess I'd got through half a dozen more flights each a little longer and higher than the previous one.

The next few days ran along much the same vein. Nice sea breezes producing almost perfect conditions. I flew every day each flight trying different things; a gentle left turn, a right turn, apply some brake and see what happens, some weight shift, get the landing gear down, flare. I was in heaven.

But in heaven it doesn't rain. 'The rain can last for days you know'

'Shut up I don't want to know that, just tell me it's going to be sunny tomorrow' It was.

Back to the flying. 'Its time to go soar people, get your kit and follow me'

I actually though he was joking. There is no way I am going to launch myself from here. I peered down the slope and surveyed the scene in my head...



'Nice area to lay out my glider and loads of room to ground handle, so far so good. Gently sloping take off ramp, gradually steepening, even better. Wing inflates, check, ok, run, take off, fly about a bit, land and smile. Easy.'

'But what if....the glider comes up a bit crooked, I run off the slope regardless and hit the forest of tree stumps 20 metres down and left of take off. Or I veer to the right and hit the hideous looking scrubland over that way. Or I bottle it and hit that ugly fence post. Or I get blown back into the trees behind take off'.

I took off perfectly (well I took off and didn't hit any of the obstacles, unlike the gang of German suicide pilots who attempted the same manoeuvre 10 minutes previously). Soared about a bit (an hour and three quarters as it happens, but only because I kept ignoring the radio commands to get come down and try some top landings).

And if I took off perfectly my landing was perhaps the exact opposite (but hey who cares when you have 100 square kilometres of beach to choose from).

From then on in it was top landings and slope landings and big ears an all manner of CP type things. And in seven days I went from complete numpty to complete numpty with BHPA CP.

If you are thinking of taking up this insanely compelling sport or are stuck somewhere in the no mans land of EP not quite CP I would thoroughly recommend the Dunes as a place to start and/or finish your training. The venue is ideal, consistent sea breezes most days, safe and non threatening take off and landings, lots of sun (most days), cheap flights to Bordeaux (with Buzz from Stanstead) and cool beer everywhere. Sometimes the airspace got a little busy but it was always easy to land then take off when things calmed down a little.

I booked onto a course with Northern Paragliders, it cost £870 for the family package but a solo pilot would do it for £495 (great value if you consider EP/CP in the UK could cost over £600). Flights were about £150 return. You can get a pick up from the airport of hire a car for about £150 for the week. Call Ian or Neil at Northern on 0845 123 2555 for more info. And before you ask NO I am not on any commission.

I went in June and the weather was great, the week before was changeable but people flew on 5 out of 7 days. It gets very busy July and August (and very hot) then September/October is supposed to be good and quieter.

Since then I have bought a 2nd hand glider (look out for a bright pink Edel Atlas with a little fat bloke slung underneath) and most of the bits I need (and some I don't!). I flown as much as weather, wife and DIY allow and have racked up almost enough hours alongside the helpful Edinburgh pilots to retire my red streamer.

Highlights include my first time off Hillend (the reason I started paragliding in the first place is after watching you guys float around the hill which I can see from my bedroom window), a big solo soar at Broughton, an even bigger leap of faith at Aonoch Mor (seemingly the conversation in the landing field went something like 'Do you think Cliff will be OK flying from here, it's a bit thermic and he's never flown in a thermal before....(WOOSH as my wing inflated and appeared on the skyline)...Doh there he is... well lets hope he manages to land safely...'). 4 flights later I had the hang of landing in a thermic car park surrounded by miles of trees and had borrowed a matchbox sized vario to tell me which way the lumpy bits of air were going.



The adventures have been coming quick and fast. Soon after Aonoch Mor (above) I was flying with some skilled and wily creatures at the Moorfoots. One was a grinning Ian Kennedy, the other was a buzzard who joined me for a few moments before reminding me that I have so much more to learn from this sport. The dunes gave me a quick and convenient starter to the skills required in Scotland and if you meet a good bunch of pilots when you come home, you will be laughing!

For Sale

This month we have more kit than your average branch of Nevisport, courtesy of Cliff Smith.

Ski Mountaineering kit

£200.00

Dynafit Tourlite Boots Size 42 Kastle skis 180cm

Fritche bindings plus sets of skins

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Cross Country ski kit | £ 100.00 |
| Karhu waxless telemark skis with Rottefella 3 pin bindings | |
| Cross-country boots size 42 (excellent condition) | |
| Karrimor waterproof jacket (with zip in fleece) and matching trousers | £ 80.00 |
| RAB Sleeping bag Expedition Model (used once in Himalaya) Medium Blue | £ 150.00 |
| Craghoppers waterproof smock Medium (Brand new RRP £ 60.00) | £ 30.00 |
| Vango Force 10 Extension (As new) | £ 40.00 |
| Skis Rossignol 210cm with SalomenS727 bindings | £ 5.00 |
| Ultimate Horizon Tent 3 season | £ 50.00 |
| Vango sherpa rucksack 65 litre | £ 30.00 |
| Raichle walking boots Size 37 (Brand new) | £ 15.00 |
| Other walking boots | Offers |
| Rohan wind top and zip in fleece (Good condition) | £ 40.00 |
| Petzl Zoom Headtorch | £ 10.00 |
| Gas stove | £ 5.00 |
| Epi Gas lantern (as new) | £ 5.00 |
| Large Trangia (as new) | £ 20.00 |
| Trangia Gas converter | £ 10.00 |
| Small Trangia (as new) | £ 15.00 |
| Nylon sleeping bag liner (brand new) | £ 10.00 |
| Nordica fleece gloves | £ 5.00 |
| Jack Wolfskin briefcase | £ 5.00 |
| Patagonia cycle shorts and top | £ 10.00 each |
| Shimano SPD cycle shoes (Size 41) | £ 10.00 |
| Vango Marco Polo Sleeping bag (as new) | £ 30.00 |
| Karrimor Expedition Karrimat (as new) | £ 10.00 |
| Patagucci Courier Bag | £ 30.00 |
| The Face BBC book to accompany the TV series RRP £ 18.99 | £ 10.00 |
| SMC Journals No 167 and 170 | £ 2.00 each |
| SMC Islands of Scotland 1 st Edition new series | £ 5.00 |
| SMC Central Highlands 4 th Edition | £ 10.00 |
| Handbook of climbing (Fyffe & Peters) | £ 10.00 |
| Mountain Navigation (Pete Cliff) | £ 5.00 |
| Salewa Climbing helmet | £ 15.00 |
| DMM deadman (brand new) | £ 10.00 |
| Deadboy (mini deadman type thing) | £ 5.00 |
| Assorted gloves | Offers |
| Wooden Azzali Kayak Paddles 108cm | Offer |
| Magura Julie Disc Brakes (front and rear) to fit Canondale Coda hubs | £ 40.00 pair |
| Shimano Deore Mega 9 gear shifters (front and rear) | £ 10.00 |
| Giro Cycle Helmet | £ 5.00 |
| Front Pannier rack (brand new) | £ 10.00 |
| Set of weights (approx 150 kgs of weights) and bench | £ 40.00 |
| Old Blacks down sleeping bag (old but in good nick) | £ 20.00 |
| Olympus OM1n 35mm SLR camera with assorted lenses, flash and accessories | £ 150.00 |
| Fujifilm MX1200 Digital Camera with 32 Mb memory card | £ 200.00 |
| Olympus Stylus 105 zoom Camera | £ 100.00 |
| Power kites - Flexifoil Super 10's with lines, padded handles and stacking lines | £ 90.00 each or both for |
| | £ 160.00 |
| Assorted climbing and canoeing videos (call for details) | Offers |

Cliff Smiths Clearout – yes more....

Assorted gaiters, gloves, thermal tops, fleece jackets, canoe dry bags, skis, rucksacks, flasks etc plus some other bits and bobs no reasonable offers refused!

FREE KIT !

Fleeces, thermal wear, gloves, sleeping mats, canoe spares, throw bags, books, compasses, hats, gloves, trousers, rock boots, canoe paddles, skis, ski poles, orange survival bags, assorted cooking kit (all ideal for camping), sigg bottles, waterproof containers (ideal for canoeing), rucksack spares, camping knife plus loads of other useful bits and bobs.

Assorted mountain bike bits and bobs. Lights (front & rear) saddle bags, rack bag, rucksack etc

ALL THIS KIT IS FREE. COME AROUND AND HAVE A RUMMAGE. MOST OF IT IS IN OK CONDITION IT'S JUST SURPLUS TO MY REQUIREMENTS AND IS GATHERING DUST. LOTS OF KIT SUITABLE FOR ASPIRING OUTDOOR INSTRUCTORS WANTING TO GET KIT FOR ASSESSMENT TYPE THINGS. ANYTHING THAT IS STILL HERE WITHIN A COUPLE OF WEEKS IS GOING IN THE SKIP

Cliff Smith 0131 332 3414 (home) 07748 703515 (mobile)

cliffsmith@ukonline.co.uk

16 House o' Hill Gardens Edinburgh EH4 2AR

Next time in Flying Scot

- Ideas for winter destinations (So far India, South Africa and Ethiopia have been mentioned over a beer or five).
- Winter coaching and development events
- First Aid Course Details
- AGM Event Details
- Flying cameras what works and what doesn't.
- Video - a guide to attaching half of the BBC to your head and getting away with it...

Articles, moans and nice pics, stories/ for sale items should be sent to

Brian.steele@zoom.co.uk

Call 0771 472 0142 if you prefer.