

# AirHeads



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January/February 2003

## Alps Maritime

Friday 1st November

Myself, Lynne, Jay and Aly flew into Nice on Friday night with Go from Bristol, easy life with no hassle and only £70 return!

Saturday 2nd

Went to Monte Carlo/Monaco and had a look at the site, landing was on the beach. It was big so no worries. Take off 2000ft above, would have been very hard to find if we had not followed the mini bus that takes pilots from bottom to top. Takeoff was so packed u could not see the mat Watched 15 or so dodgy take offs as wind was coming over the back of the hill. Was tempted but decided to give it a miss and find somewhere to stay for the next 2 nights, a bit tricky as it was a holiday weekend. Ended up in Menton.

Sunday 3rd

Weather looked a bit iffy so went to Italy (bad hangover day) The sun came out, tried to find site there and failed. Interesting day out though, worth a look as we were on the border.

Monday 4th

Went to Monaco again, one other person on take-off,



that's more like it, with wind light and on the mountain. First alpine for over a year, a bit nervous to say the least as no room to cock it up. Got off with no trouble, stunning site as you get to look down

over Monaco. The flight was a mixture of light sea breeze and thermals allowing an extended top to bottom. Landed on beach where there is a bar. Now that's what I call a landing field (-: Had one more flight which was a straight ttb, still good though! Then travelled to Greolieres in the mountains to stay at Bruce and Arna Goldsmiths.

Tuesday 5th

Another sunny day, so climbed the 700ft to take off the steep short way about 30 minutes. There was a 10 to 12 mph thermic wind which meant a reverse launch, not what was expected. Had a slightly extended top to bottom to check out the site and mainly the landing because if you over shot you would end up in the valley, bottom iffy. Retired for a spot of lunch before next climb to take off, then the wind came in from the west and stopped all flying for the day. All the sites face southish and all rely on the sun to make them work. Still plenty of good walking to be had.

Wednesday 6th

More sunshine, so another climb. This time the less steep longer way which took 45 to 50 mins. A steady thermic breeze with longer thermic gusts than the day before. This time maintained in front of take off and got 100 or so feet above. Not enough to get back to the next bowl and then on to the main ridge which runs for 10km. After 25 min got a lot of sink and landed. Explored the area in the afternoon.

Thursday 7th

The first non-sunny day, low cloud and a bit drizzly so walked across valley to opposite village and back round.

Stunning scenery and beautiful woods in height of autumn colours.

Friday 8th

Awoke to sunshine, but quite windy from the west. Bruce called it the mistral wind and said it should be all right to fly once the thermic wind picked up, he was right. Took off around 12.00 in what was now the usual light thermic wind, but a bit rougher,

managed to stay up for 20 mins before finding myself too far out over the valley. With not enough height to get back to the main hill had to land. Very lifty over landing field and struggled to get in, landing in the last third of field. Glad to be down. Had lunch then climbed back up to take off. Lighter and smoother than before managed about 15 mins going slowly down all the time. No probs with landing. Retired for well earned beer.

Saturday 9th

Got an early start to go to a local market and do the tour of the Grand Cannon. It was very grand well worth a look. Got back in time for an afternoon flight .There was a large patch of cloud over the valley so no thermic wind, shame as the sun was out all a round it. So it was an alpine launch and a top to bottom and a chance to let go of the controls and take a few pictures.

Sunday 10th

It was time to say goodbye to the mountains and off to Monaco for one last flight before our flight home. It was very light so had to alpine in front of a large group of French pilots. I managed not to let the side down! Not much lift around so had slight extended

top to bottom. I got over the beach with plenty of height so put a pass in over the nudist end of the beach (to see if there was any lift of course!!!!) Landed with style if I say so myself, packed up and went straight to the beach bar for you guessed it .....All in all a great holiday, with 8 out of 9 days of sun, 8 out of 9 were flyable we flew on 6.The site at



Monaco was the easiest to fly as the site at Greolieres was quite technical. Of course I missed you all, shame you weren't there for the flying , sunshine and cold beer!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Dinks*

### Editor's Comment

You now have a new editor, with lots of assistance from Bryon, I hope, at least until I get the hang of it. I know everyone has heard it all before, but we do need contributions. As it is bi-monthly surely we can find enough material; no matter how small, any item will be gratefully received. It has always been the same few contributors, which really has to change. If you don't feel confident enough to contribute, or feel that people will not be interested send it in anyway. I can always put it in anonymously or edit to suit. I hear so many comments, that people are only interested in high, long or important flights, not true! More people are interested in information from pilots of their own level, think about it, much easier, to empathise with. If people are willing, I would like to have regular contributions from some of our more venerable members, also a letters section might be worth a try, emails for those not on line!. Any other ideas or requests please let me know. I am happy to try out anything.

(One tip – if you do have access to a computer and can download and read the magazine you get to see the lovely photos which we can't reproduce for you in the hard copy – saves the club postage too!)

Happy New Year and safe flying

*Phil*

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## Christmas 2002

Many, many thanks again to Paul H for his hospitality; judging from the number of emails coming in, everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

We made a day of it, as last year, surprise, surprise, and the first to arrive! Drove down, at midday on Saturday, in thick fog, Jeff rang to say he was at the airport, Edinburgh! But on his way!! He'll have to be quicker than that to beat us. Dinks and Lyn hot on our heels. Lunch and a little retail therapy in Sidmouth, back to the hotel, raining steadily, but so what we weren't going out again.

First priority, into the Jacuzzi, hot or what? Must be this cold-blooded geriatrics Paul normally caters for, 45c medium rare. Judicious use of the hosepipe soon reduced this to bearable. Joined by Dinks and Lyn who very sensibly provided the wine, obviously used to living the high life. Leisurely, relaxing soak for an hour, then upstairs for afternoon tea, scones, cakes etc needed it to cool down, others started to arrive, usual crowd, plus Wessex members and partners. Great to see Nick and Jenny also Nigel and Cathy from our North Devon branch!!

Chance for a relaxing chat, then change for dinner. In the bar for drinks, video screen set up courtesy of Phil D, just for those who really are desperate. Into the dining room for dinner, five course, silver service, up to the usual standard. Good food, conversation and even balloon flying demonstration, provided by Jeff. Coffee and truffles in the lounge; then down to the serious stuff, spending our funny

## Small thin repack

Jeff very kindly organised a reserve repacking day at St Joseph's school hall, Exmouth (by kind permission of Vince McClosky - Head Teacher) one very wet Sunday in December.

We had four suspension points enabling reserves to be deployed and four packing lanes each with an overseer to help with repacking. Most people managed to deploy a second time (to check on the packing!) and then repack again. Coffee, sandwiches and mince pies were served by Chris Hoer (assisted at times by Viv) to sustain the workers and the day finished with PLF practice under the supervision of Andy Farrow from South Devon, an experienced parachutist who had been on hand all day with advice and practical help.

For those of you who missed out this time we hope to make it an annual event but you do need to make sure that Jeff knows you are interested!!

*Viv*

money on the roulette and black jack tables. As before, a roaring success, Harriett won a million and Robin broke the habit of a lifetime, and was caught gambling.

After last year when everyone spent most of the evening gambling, the disco opened later this year. The whole evening seemed to fly by, we packed in at about 3.30, earlier than last year; no late games of Ibble dibble, as Paul was too far gone. Pictures available, at a price, of Gerry and the waitress, also Paul, on the dance floor, looking distinctly the worse for wear!

Up the next morning, into the Jacuzzi to wake up, followed up by a very nice breakfast and leisurely departure. Everyone present on for next year, "can we book yet"? Looks like this is the most popular Christmas venue in the clubs history, let's hope that Paul is happy to continue in the future. No Brompton cycle trip around Sidmouth this year, off to East Hill to check the weather, smack on but too strong. Ah well! Make our way home pleasantly relaxed, and all for 45 quid.

Having the hotel completely to ourselves means that Paul can sleep more if people don't want to drive. It would be nice to fill it as he is doing it at a reduced price for us, so to this end we are thinking of inviting South Devon members to join us next year. A few comments were made about encouraging more of our members to attend before extending the invite. I think not, if people want to participate, they will, if not...!

*Phil*





## Pilot Lecture Day

For starters, 0930 seemed a bit early + serious for a Saturday morning (well, for some of us). Once there, though, the usual Condors relaxed atmos set in straight away. In the end, just about everything overran a bit, but probably

only due to considerable audience enthusiasm (i.e. debate, sometimes heated!).

A fairly large (+vocal) audience were in attendance, though only a few of us were actually taking the exam.

Jeff kicked us off with his usual professional presentation style (i.e. *deceptively* casual!), doing theory of flight + the other technical flying stuff - right up to a potted introduction to GPS complete with pretty graphics. He brought the daunting "maths bits" of polars + speed-to-fly down-to-earth in good style.

Harriet next dealt with airlaw + navigation. She produced another very professional account, a lot of it neatly tied-in to a review of airmap symbols and usefully grounded in practical flying/navigation needs.

She also actually made some sense out of some of the more meaningless + involved conventions, and showed an impressive working knowledge of the legal bits (hopefully beyond what I will ever be needing!).

Having already overrun, we then broke for lunch - a wide selection of excellent sandwiches, and *free!* (?thanks to 200 club fund?). Most of the group also ran off here to take part in the ancient Sidmouthian ceremony known as the "renewal of the parking tickets".

After reconvening, Richard filled the dreaded last-man slot with an excellent account of just about everything to do with weather, from global systems to local quirks. A large mass of material seemed to be completely under his control + you got to feel like none of this was too difficult after all.

He had maybe the most casual style of all, appearing able to work out anything on the spot. He completed the effect by being completely unfazed by an exam

question that Viv had brought with her -presumably completely unprepared.

All the speakers alike did a great job: They identified + dealt with the stuff that everyone overlooks or gets wrong, kept the audience online + involved and explained stuff from different angles until we got it (!). Most of all, they made it all seem much more fun + relevant to actual flying than in the books.

The audience got stuck into all this material with great enthusiasm. Generally there were lots of questions -occasionally extending to the obscure + competitive type where even the speakers weren't entirely sure.

There seemed to be plenty to think about for everyone, and the large pool of experience present meant that everyone got to learn something.

By the end of the day, those of us taking the actual exam all seemed a little tired + shell-shocked, not to say worried... (If you thought you more-or-less knew your stuff, you might have got a bit worried by the more involved discussions of the day - personal note!).

The exam itself wasn't really that bad, but definitely tougher in parts than I'd expected. Plus there just seemed to be an awful lot of it.

One high point, though, was the identical question that Richard had demolished for us about an hour before!

Thanks to all for a great day, worth attending at any level + probably worthwhile for anyone at least once a year. I for one won't be missing it next time.

*Patrick*

# John's Flying Diary

## Nov 11th Woolacombe

Very nice day at Woolacombe. Smooth, just right for messing about. Average flying time was over 3 hours. Shame it was only Jeff, Mr & Mrs Milner, Mr & Mrs Fouracre and Nigel. Where on earth was everyone else? Mark P and Martin D flew their HGs .Perfect day. **Phil**

Persuaded to go to Woolers in the end. Got there just as the mist was clearing from the top, and as the wind came within a degree of smack on. It was perfect for both HG's and PG's with the wind around 14MPH. Good to see Martin doing well on his Rio. Also Lyn had ample opportunity to get in tune with her new Sport. Great day. **Jeff**

## Nov 16th North Hill

Looks like perseverance or being a sad old git pays off in the end! Jeff called a comp briefing for 11.00 on North Hill. Forecast all over the place, from light and variable to N force 4/6+. Typical North Hill, no bloody wind. Sixteen enthusiasts turned up, stood around chatting as usual. Zaggi's struggling, so no chance for anyone else. In desperation even the take-off got mowed. If the weather had played ball the tasks would have been fun, but eventually the comp was postponed as the wind really was zero. Less dogged/desperate members decided to leave. Stiffs packing up, some of us even went for a walk, sad or what? Zaggies getting higher, slight wind, still very little. Maybe! Canopies back out of the cars, we really are sad. Jeff ground handled, not enough and off to the west! Zaggis getting lower. Final decision, had to put my wing back on the harness, so sorted it out and inflated, nothing! Thought I'd fly down if Viv picked me up, Jeff agreed to do same. All the rest stood around to watch the entertainment, a fully matching synchronised dash to the green. Go for it, just enough to inflate, turn and leg it. Turned and headed for the farmhouse gully, the most likely place for anything. Very weak thermal but enough to turn and climb slowly, yeehaaaa! Looking back to t/o Jeff launched and joined me. Beautiful smooth thermal, no noticeable wind in trees below, but very enjoyable. Soon joined by Andy, Harriet, Mark, Viv and Dinks also a visitor. A little crowded but nice. Later flew along to the green and all floated down to impress the spectators. Would have made a great picture, looking down a line of gliders landing. Not epic but 25 minutes we wouldn't have had. **Phil**

## Nov 18th Branscombe

Flew at Branscombe today - on PGs were Jeff, Paul Hook (at Sidmouth), Derek P plus passenger on tandem, Steven Corben, Derek S and myself, and Simon B on HG. A bit strong (about 15ish when I took off but more like 17-18 when I landed an hour later) and a bit off to the east, but very pleasant flying. I piled in on landing - entirely pilot error as I came in from the east of t/o and the wind was a

bit off to the east, and I didn't give myself enough height to turn the glider into wind in time. I now have a very muddy harness and sore lower right side of my back. Very simple, but I'll state the obvious anyway - I should, of course, have approached from the west side of take off, given that the wind was off to the east. Doh. I don't think anyone else had any problems. **Harriet**

## Nov 29th East Hill

Ideal late after noon flight at East Hill, the whole hill to myself. Plenty of lift until the wind decreased and went off to the north. The landing field is still very wet. **Andy**

## Nov 29th Batcombe

After a false start at lunch time managed to take off from Batcombe at 4.00pm for an end of the day 50 minute flight. Mike, its not my round, Richards made the top of the stack at 285ft. SC,SC,MR Fun but a tad chilly - the beer was most welcome - thanks Steve!. **Stephen**

## Nov 29th Woolacombe . A Great Escape.

Gone rather light (~6kt?) by 1500, took off after convincing myself the beach was probably nearly dry. Pretty desperate as not flown for 6 weeks. Good for 100-150'ato, getting tricky below -50'. Still enough to fly whole hill + out to Potters, over dunes etc. Always fun making the most of weak conditions. Over an hour in occasional weak sun + very weak thermal lift -brief high of 180'ato actually well out over dunes. Lots of PGs to dodge, hope I didn't upset anyone! Bob Moore the only one definitely recognised, he'd walked up to top launch. (Somebody packing something yellow below in bowl, could have been PF?) Finally gave in to beach landing, packing up with the \*entire\* beach to myself! The gentle beauty of surf rolling in the failing light. Was much disturbed by lengthy swearing at pathetic efforts to minimise sand in glider - is anything worse for precision machinery than wet beach sand? From nowhere, Nigel from N.Devon arrives to offer help back to the road + a lift to the top. What a star, but where were all the Condors? **(At Work!-ed) Patrick**

## Dec 3rd East Hill

2 flights @ East Hill Both 1/2 an hour. Not Bad four the first visit to the new take off (well done Derek). Quite a light day had to scratch a bit to get above trees but once above was able to fly about 1/2 a mile of ridge . Plus got in two top landings even if the last one involved a scrape with a tree!!!! **Dinks**

## Dec 6th Bickleigh

Bit light at Bickleigh after lunch, gloomy as well but at last in the air again, Chris S joined me, but we gave up as it was too far N and too light for that direction. **JOJ**

## Dec 7th Eggerdon

Loitered around Eggerdon for an hour and a half in a cold gusty (12-20) NE. Spent 5 minutes in the air and confirmed it was RAF. Steve C took off 20 minutes later

and agreed. It rained - we went home.... Happy Days  
**Stephen**

#### **Dec 7th North Hill**

Had a couple of hours, 8/8 cloud, base 550 but very lifty. Gradually moved off to the east. Jeff Viv Simon B Derek S Mark P flew. Andy Dinks and Martin K arrived as wind started to pick up. Not fantastic, but worth it! **Phil**

#### **Dec 8<sup>th</sup> North Hill**

Hang gliders only, surprise! Reasonable breeze, off slightly to the east causing some turbulence on t/o Jeff, Mark, Me, Robin, Mark P Harriet and Craig! Long time no see. Steve and Martin decided that it was too strong. Sensible as it was 30mph in the top landing. Great to be on a stiffy for a change, so much better for pushing into wind. Flew across Minehead bay to the golf course and back easily. Cloud base was 6- 800' at the east end of the ridge, forming low out to sea all the time. Landed on beach cleaner than top landing followed by Craig, Harriet and Mark, slightly stressed on his new SX3, new landing technique, turn into wind a 400' and head out to sea! Expected to see him sink up to his knees in mud when he landed. Good to see the HGs enjoying themselves, shame Steve and Martin couldn't fly. **Phil**

#### **Dec 22nd Ham Hill**

JM phoned to say the world famous Ham Hill was flyable. Got there and It had gone a bit light. Alan B took off and went down, John had a go and scraped back in to the bushes below take off (he had a couple of bush encounters!) I had a go had slight problem (not saying what, though!!!!) so ended up bottom landing. Climbed back up, took off again had such a great flight I just had to bottom land again. Lets just say I could count the minutes on one hand. Then John tried some interesting new take off locations to keep us all entertained. It was a better way to spend the afternoon then vegging in front of the TV after the party, as it worked out some of the booze. **Dinks**

#### **Wed 25 December Sidmouth**

12:30 pm - Wind dead southerly, Strength 10 mph, Sun shining, Very light orographic, Seagulls soaring. Not a Condor in sight! **DP**

There was one had 20 mins in a Santa suit. **PH**

#### **Dec 27th Charmouth**

Very pleasant flying. Shame it was a bit intimidating for the rest, very little beach, and full of people, to the right of t/o and none to the left! What the hell, blew the cobwebs away. Arrived to find Jeff all on his own with the zaggi, sad! Carried up to main t/o, looking OK. Never seen Jeff get down to the car with his model and back to the top so quick!! Took off into 12/14mph smooth, Jeff and Viv sitting on t/o. Why? Now 18mph. Shame! Dinks, Jay and John H arrived, stood around hoping the wind would drop! Landed by the cafe to talk to Mr Glum, great to see him out, took off again. Jeff took off as I carried up, John off lower down, all ok. Flew along to the high cliff, max at 700' in cloud, surprisingly rough, but enjoyable. Landed as wind now dropping. Dinks gave it a go, but getting lighter,

struggled, unsuccessfully. All eventually landed and packed up. **Phil**

Great to be in the air again. Nearly three months is too long. Interesting conditions with one huge patch of lift and lots of scratching at cliff top height. Charmouth is a lovely site! **JF**

#### **Dec 28th Woolacombe**

A bit stronger than forecast, so decided to get current on the Hang Glider. MP and SR were already there when we got to the TO. Someone measured 27MPH at the top. Noticed JF flying his PG and was soon joined by PF. Had 90 minutes of good flying topping out at 1300 ft ATO. 2nd flight and it was lighter by now, another 60 minutes. Packed up, tired hungry and happy. Lots of Condors paragliding all day from the dunes. Picked out PF,VF,JF,SN,Dinks, AT and TD. Other HG's were RC and MRH along with Trevor and Jay turning up and sharing a glider. Good day had by all. **Jeff**

Over twenty PGs in total, flying from the bowl and the dunes, Condors, North and South Devon, Dales! etc. All had hours of flying, totally knackered in the end, Tried out the Hornet SP, what a difference. Finished off flying with Dinks to the Red Barn for a drink with Viv, John and the North Devon crowd. End of a very pleasant day. **Phil**

#### **Dec 28th East Hill**

It was ok at East Hill too. Craig M & I flew till a front came in. **JOJ**

**The Club Committee has given me the task of preparing a Site Guide to our smaller sites. This will be for Members Only and each Site will have a local Pilot to take care of queries, liase with the Landowners and introduce Members to the Site. Anyone having Sites that they would like included or look after please get in touch. I hope to be able to give you a fuller idea how this is coming along by the next Airheads. Publication on CD during the Summer (2003!).**

**JF**

## Safety

### *One incident worthy of mention this month, raised some important questions.*

Unfortunately, or not, as the case may be, for the pilot involved, I had a ringside seat. There is no need to mention any names, but hopefully some useful lessons may be learnt by less experienced pilots.

The incident occurred at Woolacombe on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October. We arrived to find the hang gliders in the air and a breeze blowing up the bowl, looked perfect for flying from there. Two pilots eating lunch, no others in the air. I took off, “just to check the conditions“ Oh yeah!! Absolutely perfect, glassy smooth and plenty of lift. The two pilots took off, I landed and watched Viv and Nancy take off, no problems for anyone.

The bowl is an ideal place for paragliders to take off if there is enough wind, and also saves the walk up. It is not a problem taking off BUT it is a bowl and the wind does funnel up through it. If the conditions are fresher it can cause problems landing there, which brings us to the crux of the problem. I had landed low down in the bowl for a bite to eat and the pilot(s) concerned decided that they wanted to do the same. Both are relative novices but with a reasonable amount of experience on this site. After a number of unsuccessful attempts by both of them (too slow and high up the bowl - resulting in them being hoovered back up) one managed to land by burying the brakes too high resulting in a heavy landing, just as the glider started to spin, followed by being dragged up the hill!

Having made a mental note to “have a chat“ later I watched him take off from much higher up. He flew around quite happily then decided to try another landing, much too high up the bowl turned into wind (smack on and very lifty) gradually climbing, and buried the brakes with a vengeance!. Interesting! I never expected to watch a Jocky S demo at quite such close quarters and in slow motion. It was text book, with the glider surface starting to ripple and oscillate, non change in brake application, so it obviously decided “sod it” and promptly collapsed, and yes it was very prompt.

Complete weightlessness meant that the pilots arms were flung up, inadvertently, but thankfully, releasing the brakes - too late - if he had had another thirty feet it would have reopened. As it was the glider was re-inflating when he hit the ground, very hard. No movement so legged it up the hill to find him very badly winded, in pain, and unable to move. Kept still, detached canopy and had a chat. After some time checking that all was functioning ok he decided to stay where he was and rest. He felt able to walk after about an hour and went home. Later ambulated to hospital, stiff and having difficulty moving, severe bruising, but nothing broken, he was very lucky.

He had not realised at the time that he had stalled the glider, but worse than this his comment later was that he had intended to “stall it in”. Does anyone seriously think that this is any sort of option? Certainly not from any height that you are not happy to fall from!

The bowl is a lovely spot to fly from but the landing approach can be difficult, especially in stronger conditions, don't mess about, there can be a lot of lift, be positive and fly it in. If you are unsure about it, fly down to the green or the beach if necessary. Woolacombe has a deserved reputation for being a nice easy site for all skill levels, but there is always a risk, treat all sites with respect.

### *Phil*

### A little tip on pre-fighting your paraglider!!

The problem with most things is the more times you do something the more casually you do it. This can lead to real problems.

I was preparing to take off at NH yesterday for the 2nd time. I built the usual wall and looked along the lines to check that they were untangled before popping the glider up. All looked ok.... It was a bit fresh and as soon as the glider popped up I was really on my way. A bit of turbulence resulted in a handful of left brake. This was fine to correct the bumps but afterwards I was turning hard left with my left hand up. In auto mode I corrected with right brake, but this just made me drift backwards and upwards. I saw the problem immediately. The LH brake line

had looped through itself into a knot and was stopping the brake line from returning. Loads of speed bar stopped the backwards flight and I spent a long time trying to free the line and undo the knot. Despite trying my hardest I couldn't do it, so with the ears on and speed bar I slowly sank into the bottom landing.

The landing was fine and uneventful, but the moral is don't allow a situation like that to arise in the first place. **Never fly before you carry out a full and proper pre-flight.**

*Jeff*

## Trainers Corner with Jeff Hoer

### Club Lectures 2002.

It's always difficult to arrange non-flying events for the Condors, cause you can bet your life the event coincides with good flying weather then no one will turn up.



It was planned to hold the club lectures at Pauls Hotel sometime around mid autumn. A crap forecast eventually brought together three nervous Lecturers, and fifteen eager Pilots all ready to learn something on a wet and windy Sunday morning.

Harriet has taken over from Mark Langley this year, presenting the Air Law and Navigation lectures, whilst Richard Sheridan did Met, and I did Instruments and Principles of flight. I had a revamped PP package this year and Harriet started hers from scratch to produce a really good presentation. Richard kept to his format of flip chart and permanent markers, which as always was to great effect.

John and Robin provided a little light relief between the Lectures, with a little rendition on why they fly Paragliders and Hang Gliders. This soon turned into a mini forum with everyone chipping in. It was a shame that this had to be cut short, as everyone was very relaxed by this time and some very interesting points were raised and discussed.

I had allowed an hour for each of the Lectures and 10 minutes for John and Robin, but that time scale soon went right out the window. The lectures were lasting

around 90 minutes each and with a well received lunch break of around 30 minutes, the day just went.

We started the day at 10:00 sharp and I left the hotel at 18:30. Tired, hungry and very very happy.

It was very rewarding to hear that all who took the exams after the lecture, passed. (It proves we must have been doing something right).

It is intended to do a further exam session sometime around Feb time, so if you want to and have not already asked me for a paper, then please do so ASAP.

### Small thin repack.

This went really well, with Andy Farrow coming up from S Devon. Andy was a Free fall parachute Instructor and Packer, so we relied on him to keep a watchful eye on us. Simon, Phil and I helped where required, and with most of us managing a couple of throws whilst hanging from the school hall beams.

All in all a very useful and worthwhile day.

Many thanks to Vince Mclosky for the use of the Hall, Simon M, Phil P and Andy Farrow for their help in repacking and Viv and Chris for the excellent lunch.

I think we will do it again next year.

PS the PLF practice was a real hoot.

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## **Forthcoming Meetings**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February – New Venue - Maypole Inn, Thurloxtton, Nr Taunton** (on A38 Taunton/Bridgwater Road – equal distance from M5 Junc. 24 North Petherton and Junc 25 Taunton)

Rob Bayly (who incidentally produced the BBC series "999" and "Death by DIY" ) took part in the Chrysler transatlantic challenge the first ever balloon race across the Atlantic. Rob along with Don Cameron of Cameron Balloons made up the British team and competed against teams from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and America. Starting point was Bangor, Maine, USA – chosen for its geographical position in relation to the expected Atlantic wind patterns. The finishing post was the first hard surfaced road in mainland Europe or Great Britain; a long finishing line made necessary by the vagaries of the oceanic winds that separated the balloons in flight. Should be a good one !!!



**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March – Maypole Inn, Thurloxtton**

AGM and presentation of annual awards (will include refreshments). Change of date due to the number of members of the committee away in Spain!

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April -** A talk by Judy Leden and husband Chris Dawes – not to be missed! Small charge of £5 on the door.

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## **Survivors Song**

we who can soar  
eagle hearted and high  
beyond all projections

we who can soar  
and dance with the angels  
on cloud swirls of splendour  
knowing the truth  
is a feeling of starlight

we who can dance  
and make light of the  
darkness  
and yield with the crushing  
of dreams in the dawn light

and spin love out of nothing  
but damp earth and sunbeams

we who can join  
join together in spirit  
to weave gossamer circles  
in air full of failings

we who can soar

*Paula Kovacs  
(With thanks to Lyn & John Milner)*

## Book Review

by Skyman

"Flying with Fate" by Harald Penrose.

Real pilots don't read books, so I wouldn't dream of boring you with the background information that, a year or so ago, Harriet dragged me out to the Cinema to see a film called "*Chocolat*". It was delicious, and so began a literary involvement with the authoress Joanne Harris. She writes entrancing stories, which I would recommend to anyone. But, after late-evening work in the office, struggling to keep the business on target (where did I put that target?) I often need a good read to slow the pulse and induce sleep. Between-Harris, so to speak, it is necessary to have some light relief. For me, that would usually be the UMG motor bike mag or, if I'm desperate, one of the glossy bike mags.

None of this is likely to interest many Condors, but it was a visit to that den of iniquity, Honiton Library, that triggered this review. Browsing aimlessly, my eye fell upon the autobiography of Harald Penrose – "*Flying with Fate*". Indeed, I rather think the book slid out from the shelf and fell into my open hands.....

Harald (two "a"s) Penrose was Westlands' test pilot from the 1920's through to the 60's, when he took on their international sales. During that testing time he flew an fantastic assortment of remarkably dangerous-looking aircraft and, protected only by Fate (and, later, a parachute), he had a few adventures. The cover picture alone is enough to put the fear of God into anyone who ever thought of flying. Imagine a late-seventies hang glider with a sail made from rigid material and an old Austin A35 suspended beneath it, the roof of which has been removed to ease access for the pilot, and a propeller tacked on the back. The whole thing was clearly designed and painted by someone from Robot Wars, but was amongst the earliest experiments with tail-less swept-wing aircraft. Westlands fittingly called it the Pterodactyl, and Harald flew several variants of this strange craft from the twenties onward. Like most of the designs of that time, it never went into production.

Naturally, given the pioneering nature of his work, he had many very hairy moments and lucky escapes. He also held the world altitude record for a while, and was the first to use oxygen and a sealed cockpit in order to fly higher than Mount Everest. At this time Test Pilots were amongst the media heroes, so

he achieved considerable fame - almost as much as the many of that profession who died whilst working.

In his spare time he built a small wooden sailplane, with which he enjoyed many happy hours soaring sites we fly today. He regarded this as real flying, and when hang gliders came along he would have flown them, had his landing gear not been a little too shaky..

The book also gives an insight into the strange world of the aviation industry, an insight which would convince a wise person not to try to work in it! Westlands' progress is charted through to the eighties, at which point it is clear that Harald preferred the more carefree early days. In later life he enjoyed flying tiny light aircraft around the Somerset levels and much of the rest of our area, and wrote about this in great detail in some of his other books. "*Airymouse*" is a particularly relaxing read, so much so that I found myself reading from it to my father – another old pilot – on his last day of life.

There are many significant passages in "*Flying with Fate*". Did you know that before the Second World War Eggardon hill, from which I flew the Condors first local XC back in 198something, was visited by pioneering German sailplane pilots? One arrived by car, to give the fledgling Dorset Gliding Club a demonstration of the remarkable German gliders, but Robert Kronfeld flew in with his machine, having flown XC from a hill near Portsmouth. A flight to goal, well before the war!

The end of the book is particularly poignant. Soon after Penrose retired Microlights burst on to the aviation scene. He was delighted to find that he could fly one without a licence, and that his pension could support the endeavour, thus he would be able to continue flying in his retirement. But when the CAA realised these things actually flew like aircraft, they decided you did need a licence, after all. Harald applied for one and was summarily told that, in the absence of a proper Log Book to back up his claim of many thousands of hours flying many hundreds of different aircraft, he would have to swear an affidavit and have it countersigned by certain officials before a licence could be considered!

Faced with this uncaring and immovable bureaucracy, Harald tired of argument. Perhaps this was a signal from Fate that his flying days were over?

If you can find it, this book is well worth reading.

## Website Updates

The Condors website now has a calendar page for forthcoming events at [www.eclipse.co.uk/freelyer/calendar.htm](http://www.eclipse.co.uk/freelyer/calendar.htm) . There isn't much in there at the moment, but if you have anything you want adding to the list, please let me know, eg clubnight speakers, comps, holidays, trips, courses, etc. I need date(s) and contact details as well as what the event is, please.

Regarding a coaches page, so far not one single person has sent me anything to go onto this! Please will coaches send me a (relevant) line or two about themselves (eg HG/PG, hill/tow, how many years' experience, availability ,etc) and preferably a mugshot as well. Up to date contact details would be helpful to save me having to find this separately. This webpage is intended to help newcomers identify coaches in their home area and on the hill, so please don't be shy!

*Harriet*

## Chairmans Chat

And so another year begins. I had my first fight of the year at North Hill along with what looked like half the club today. Not bad for January.

From the little I saw of last year you are all still flying as much as ever which when it comes down to it is what it's all about.

2002 offered me the full spectrum of Hang Gliding emotion. Elation after flying 16 miles from Smeatharpe in April, my first XC. Frustration due to lack of flying, entirely my own fault but that's another story. Oh My Gawd when flying downwind into the ground at 40 mph .

Hang Gliding is looking up, with Brett Wright turning in the longest Condor hang glider fight in over a decade and any number of new HG pilots.

So as with everyone else at this time of year I've made a resolution to fly more, fly further and fly better. I did the same last year but I mean it this time, honest.

Have Fun

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